PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

Bc

Co

duci

BX 5133 .T8 N8
Tuckwell, William, 1829-1919.
Nuggets from the Bible mine /
extracted by W. Tuckwell

NUGGETS FROM THE BIBLE MINE

NUGGETS FROM THE BIBLE MINE

EXTRACTED BY

THE REV. W. TUCKWELL

LATE FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM," "REMINISCENCES OF OXFORD," "PRE-TRACTARIAN OXFORD," "REMINISCENCES OF A RADICAL PARSON," "MONOGRAPH ON LYCIDAS," ETC.

PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

5133
.T8
N8

Printed in 1913

NOTE

To the unknown friends at whose instance, and by whose assistance, these sermons are transferred from manuscript to print, my most sincere acknowledgments are due. Without the aid given generously to age-enfeebled eyes by my friend and neighbour, the Rev. T. S. Porterfield, the Volume could not have been made ready for the Press. *Laus illi debetur, et a me gratia major.*

W. T.

Pyrford Rough
1912

CONTENTS

I. OLD TESTAMENT NUGGETS

	PAGE
The Raven and the Dove	3
Bethel	10
Peniel	19
Joseph's Tears	27
The Mount of Aaron	34
Balaam	42
The Witness of the Stone	52
The Three Neighbours	63
King Saul	72
David	81
Elijah's Cowardice	89
Jehu	97
Jonadab, the Son of Rechab	105
A Great Lady	111
Naaman	118
The Valley of Dry Bones	128

II. GOSPEL NUGGETS

	PAGE
Peace to Gentle Men	139
Gold and Frankincense and Myrrh	146
Neighbourliness	154
Dives and Lazarus	169
What She Could	179
The Motive of Christ's Death	187
The Breaker	192
Ascent	199
Love the Solvent of Sin	206
Service	214
Doubt, Belief, Faith	223
Jewels	232
Art in Worship	240
Inspiration	251
Fragments	260
The Face of God	268

I. OLD TESTAMENT NUGGETS

THIS book containeth wise sayings, dark sentences, and parables, and certain ancient godly stories of men that pleased God: also prayers and songs: moreover, what benefits God had vouchsafed His people, and what plagues He had heaped upon their enemies.

From the Prologue to Ecclesiasticus.

THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE

He sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro; and he sent forth a dove, which returned unto him into the ark.

FEW of us probably have seen a raven wild; scarce birds now, they were common once in England; so common, that places where they bred in numbers were often named after them: —Ravensthorpe, Ravenglass, Ravendale. They play a part in Scripture, in mythology, in history. In Scripture, as in this deluge story; in the Book of Judges again, the two Midianite chiefs were named Oreb and Zeb, the raven and the wolf. Ravens were sent by God to feed Elijah. In the Proverbs, they were to pluck out the eyes of an undutiful son. Amongst our heathen forefathers the raven was the bird of Odin, and was painted on the pirate sea-kings' flags—an emblem of rapine and destruction. In folk-lore of all nations it is ill-omened. "May you go to the ravens!" was the Greek curse on an enemy. If a Roman traveller met a raven on his path he turned back home at once.

Shakespeare quotes him more than once as the messenger of bad luck. A raven croaks the entrance of Duncan within the fatal halls of Macbeth; and the most tragic figure in Walter Scott's vast picture gallery he named Ravenswood. Browning's "Caliban" sees in him the familiar spirit of the powerful and bad god Setebos. He is ever viewed with alarm as suggesting supernatural but sinister power. One sees the reason in the bird's shape and habits: wild and solitary of life, with sepulchral, solemn croak; of nature cruel, mischievous, crafty; in captivity savage, vicious, thievish; one understands why Noah turned it out to rid himself of it on the first chance; was glad when, flying to and fro, it did not return.

And ever in contrast with the raven stands the dove, with strong wing, soothing voice, placid eye; intelligent, gentle, domesticated; surrounding human dwellings; making music in immemorial elms, loving nest and mate. So the singing-women in the sixty-eighth Psalm compare Israel exchanging the foulness and slavery of the Egyptian brick kilns for the freedom and cleanness of their Sinai wanderings, to a dove with gold and silver wings. So in the New Testament a dove hovered over the head

of Christ; so in Christian art it stands ever for the Holy Spirit, bearing the olive branch of peace, emitting the seven virtue rays of love, simplicity, innocence, purity, meekness, compunction, faithfulness; it represents, too, sometimes, amongst early painters, the soul of man hovering just out of the mouth of an expiring saint. One sees that Noah put her out reluctantly; was glad when she came back; reached out his hand and drew her in.

So, then, the raven stands for evil qualities, which affright and injure men; the dove for good qualities, which cheer and help them. And in every ark are specimens of both. Men and women there are, and will be, in the world, of hearts corrupt and breeding noxious growths; quarrelsome, malignant, selfish centres of strife and bickering; tyrannical to weak, surly to equals, obsequious to strong. Their neighbours would gladly have them go; rejoice when they flap their black wings, fly away, and come not back. Men, and women too, there are of gentle manners, winning looks, soothing presence, quiet and restful, home-loving and home-gladdening—centres of harmony and peace; their neighbours grieve when they go; long for, and rejoice at their return. Sometimes in a single

family we see the raven and the dove. We see the raven, as a child—petulant, fretful, sullen; as a boy, disobedient to parents, untractable to teachers, quarrelsome with mates; as a man dangerous and lawless. He goes: Egypt is glad at his departing; hopes he will not come back. And we see the dove quiet, serious, thoughtful; yet alive to merriment and joy; the pride of parents, the confidant of brethren, a credit to the family. As years go on, all dread his going from the home. Go he must into the world, but his every return brings peace and cheerfulness and joy.

And does not the heart contain its raven and its dove? Do we detect in ourselves sometimes irreverence and profanity, undutifulness and violence, intemperance and self-indulgence, dishonesty and double-dealing, covetousness, and discontent? It is the flap of the raven's wing within our souls. Are our ears open to the voice of God, our hearts to the love of man? Are we resolute in our devotion to duty, frankly surrendering to the service which is perfect freedom? We recognise the presence of the dove. Compound is each man's nature; the lower part is Satan's, the higher part is God's. To renounce the devil and to worship God, to

expel the raven and retain the dove, is the probation of human life.

Once more in Scripture and religious art the dove, as we have said; symbolises the Holy Spirit. It hovers above the baptismal font to show the purity of regenerative cleansing; it sits on the cross to sweeten suffering; on the home to foster tender family union; on the society to bring harmony of mutual love and common worship; on the heart to beget devotion, piety, love of God and man. Without it the finest ark becomes a wreck; with it the craziest bark will surmount the fiercest storm. We may drive out the dove; quench the spirit; stifle good aspirations; outrage good impulses; close the window of the soul against God's messengers when they come to us with olive branch in hand, until they retreat and leave us to ourselves. We may cast out the raven; banish unclean, unkind lawless tempers; banish self-deceit or perfidy; banish criminal idleness or unrestraint; close the window of our ark against temptations to let them in, however they may clamour for admission. And when the raven is gone we may cherish, foster, keep the dove. If it leaves us for a time, it will be for errands of mercy upon earth, or for a visit to its

Father in Heaven, to return again to the society, the home, the heart, that has held and entertained and loved it, bearing the celestial-grown olive spray of peace which passeth understanding.

The ark of patriarchal story floated on its waste of waters, no land seen, no harbour near; but the raven was cast out to disappear, and the dove remained, to fly patiently to and fro upon its master's service; to bring home the reassuring olive branch of federal promise; to guide the tossed vessel to the firm hill top, whence his sacrificial gratitude might rise into the rainbowed heaven. Our ark, the Church of Christ, floats on its troubled way, and we are passengers within it. Waves and storms and fogs surround it, hiding mountain tops which are the vision of God's face and love. *But*, the Spirit's mighty wind blows round and wafts us still in the prayers we pray and the deeds of duty we perform. *But*, the raven, distrusted, detected, cast out, leaves our natures free to impulses nobly divine. *But*, the dove comes softly with its olive leaf in daily Bible-readings and in Sunday messages of love. And so the time arrives when our ark strikes against the side of Ararat, and we leave its sheltering roof;

at first, to climb the hill; at last, to reach the top, where spreads the encircling rainbow of eternal mercy, whence rises the sweet savour of universal everlasting sacrifice.

BETHEL

How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.

NEARLY midway down the high range of limestone hills which forms the backbone of the Holy Land, is a place sought out with curiosity and reverence, alike by Jewish and by Christian travellers. It is to the eye an unimposing and a barren spot to-day, a mere stony floor, with here and there a perched or a projecting rock; but empty tombs and crumbling ruins show it to have been famous and frequented once, and its significant name, Bethel, is stamped on many a page of early Jewish history. Here, while it was still a nameless tract, Abraham halted to rest and to build an altar, on his first descent into Palestine, "going on toward the south." Here, three years later, occurred the severance between himself and Lot, with disastrous consequences to the seceding younger man. Here, under a spreading terebinth or Turkish oak, known long afterwards as the

"Oak of Tears," Jacob, returning from long exile, buried his nurse, Deborah; and here another Deborah, the prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, sate under a palm-tree as Judge over her neighbours in Zebulun and Naphthali. Hither, on a strange occasion of judicial vengeance, came all the tribes save one to take counsel of Jehovah. And here, lastly, Jeroboam, first king of the separated northern kingdoms, fashioned on Egyptian model his stately rival to the Temple at Jerusalem. But no one of these is so significant as the incident to which the venerable relic in the first instance owes its name. We remember how the young Jacob, fleeing from the face of his brother Esau, "lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillow, and lay down in that place, to sleep." He was an unhappy and a banished man; he had left the home of his youth and the mother whom he dearly loved, and had set forth alone upon a far-distant journey, sure of hardships and perils by the way, uncertain if repulse or kindness awaited him from the unknown kinsmen at its end. One especial memory must have followed him on this his first night away

from home, to remind him of the change that had befallen him: no doubt the household of pious Isaac knelt each night around the altar, which we are told that he had built beside his tent, to ask God's protection through the hours of darkness and to thank Him for the blessings of the day; but here, in this bare, wild, rocky slope, was no altar to suggest God's presence, no well-remembered sign to show that He was near. We can guess with what a sense of desolation and abandonment the tired wanderer lay down to sleep, the hard rock for his bed, a stone his pillow, the over-arching sky his only canopy. But though he knew it not, the Lord was in that place; in the visions of the night the stones around him seemed to form themselves into the steps of a vast staircase, whose foot was set upon the earth, and whose top reached to heaven: "and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it; and, behold, the Lord stood above it. And Jacob awakened out of his sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Think with what a different mind he must have pur-

sued his journey after such an awakening. He had lain down abandoned and forlorn, his home and friends left far away, and all that spoke to him of God and heaven left far behind him, too; he woke up to feel that angels were near him, that heaven was around him, that God would be with and bless him everywhere.

Many a one has left his house since then as Jacob did, with the same wistful aching pang for those he leaves behind, the same sense of being alone and abandoned in the world. And to many in such a case has the same comfort been vouchsafed which came to him. The heavens have not opened, nor the descending message come in visible angelic form; but if the loss of the familiar friends of home, of their tenderness and their watchful love, have brought with it a keener memory of Him who sticketh closer than a brother; if, on kneeling to the private prayer or entering the house of God, the heart, which is sore with longing for its dear ones, turns with a new sense of love and confidence to realise the unseen presence of its Father which is in heaven; if God becomes present to the exile in his prayers as He was not present amid the happiness of home life; then no doubt the heavenly staircase has been

opened, angels have come down like flying pursuivants to aid and cheer, the scene which was strange and lonely has been made sacred and most homelike by the discovery "that the Lord is in this place."

Once again, the story tells us, after twenty years had passed, Jacob revisited the scene of his vision, no longer a solitary exile, but prosperous and wealthy, the patriarch of a great company, with wives and children, menservants and maidservants, innumerable flocks and herds. The rocky hill-side, which had been so lonely before, was enlivened with the sights and sounds that attend the encampment of an Arab tribe. An altar for daily sacrifice was made to mark the spot where the tired wanderer had lain down to sleep; and the new name BETH-EL ("House of God") given to the spot by Jacob, and affectionately retained even to the present day by his descendants, marks the grateful memory of the partriarch for the place where first he learned to reverence God's universal presence—the place which was to him more than any other in the world, "the house of God and gate of heaven."

The story wakes an echo in the hearts of most of us: in looking back upon our past lives

PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

we are nearly sure to find a Bethel somewhere on the road. The Church to which we went as children, which first brought clearly the awe of God's presence into our minds, where we listened with a sense of something deeply solemn to words which we nevertheless only half followed and half understood; the font where we are told that we unconsciously renounced our sins and vowed to follow Christ through our lives as faithful soldiers in His army; the altar where we were confirmed; the corner of the churchyard where some well-known grave first forced into our minds the thought of death—these linger in our memories through life; they are rooted not in our taste or reason but in our affections, and the love of them is ever fresh and tender. Happy English land! where every little village has its house of God to plant such deathless memories in the souls of men; in one place lowly and humble, in another beautiful and costly; but each a Bethel enshrined in many hearts, each binding many souls by links unthought of, yet most real, to goodness and to God.

Our superstitious forefathers believed that when a new-built Church was consecrated to God, the devils who had taken up their abode in it at first, fled from the sight of holy rites,

the sound of holy words; on many an ancient Church you see rude, uncouth figures carved outside the walls, representing, we are told, these evil spirits taking flight. I am afraid that there are devils which no consecration will drive out. If worldliness or lust or mammon sit throned in the heart of man, they will come with him to Church as well as haunt him in his home; but of all the exorcisms which God provides to drive these devils from his heart, none is so simple, so cogent, so divine, as the reviving memory of early religious feeling. A man leaves his home and goes out into the world; sin, or worldliness, or intellectual conceit, may harden him, and early tender associations may seem to have died out of his heart; but they are not dead, only overlaid and stifled for a while. And just as when a forest tree has been levelled or a mass of underwood is cut away, seeds will suddenly spring up into life beneath the air and sunshine, that have lain dormant, though not dead, for many a year, so, when adversity, or sickness, or the sight of near-approaching death, levels the pride of a man's soul and scatters the falsehoods that have weighed upon it, the seed sown in childhood will spring up and bear fruit; the memory of the Sunday

school, the Sunday sermon, the seat in Church, the churchyard grave, will unlock fountains of tenderness that have long been dry, and penitence and change of heart will owe their growth to the long-forgotten, late-remembered thoughts of those pure early days, when the staircase between earth and heaven was open to our childish eyes, and angels bore their messages of love from the open gate of heaven to the blessed house of God.

Well, then, in this our Bethel, let us strive to feel what Jacob felt in his. I know that God is everywhere—on the barren mountain top as truly as in the Christian Church. It is the special lesson which Jacob's story teaches; but the power to perceive His presence rests, remember, with ourselves. If irreverence or carelessness, wandering eyes or inattentive minds, weave a veil to hang between our souls and Him, then, though present everywhere, He is present *not* to us. And when we consecrate a special building to His worship, people walls and windows with hallowed scrolls and emblems eloquent of Him; call colour and ornament and music to our aid that we may worship Him in the BEAUTY of holiness; we are not striving to imprison the All-present within

a temple made by hands, but we bring together all things which may wake and kindle our own perceptions of His presence; we train ourselves to realise that feeling of His nearness, without which all utterance of prayer and praise is idle, formal, Pharisaic.

"It is good for us to be here": yet none the less it is "a dreadful place!" Think what company we are in, and who it is that we invoke to witness and to judge our deeds. Here, as in Christ's parable, when all are set, the Lord comes in to see the guests. He looks at the wedding garments, not at the Sunday clothes—"Friend, how camest thou in hither having it not?" As Christ told the tale, the question was asked before the judgment-seat of God. Too late then, to change indifference into devotion, to learn the worship of God, to find out what is meant by blessings abandoned and chances thrown away. Here not too late; here we may train ourselves to love the house and presence of Almighty God as Jacob did; our Sunday meetings here may be the steps of such a ladder as he saw, up which, in angel company, we too may walk—a dreadful place! for we are sinners in God's sight; and yet the gate of heaven, for we may be saints at His right hand.

PENIEL

He had power over the angel and prevailed.

THERE is a famous picture which most of us must have seen—Satan playing at chess with a man for his soul. It arrests by its *treatment*—the fiend's malignant smile, the man's face beautiful but scarred with pride and passion, the intentness of both upon the game. It arrests by its *subject*, for it is a game which every one must play—life the chessboard, the players Flesh and Spirit, the lower and the higher natures, man's soul the prize. Some win from the first, some begin with loss and afterwards recover, some make no serious play, lose piece after piece; the curtain falls upon checkmate, we know not what may be beyond, but this life anyhow has been a failure. Theology holds no exclusive patent in the topic, problem though it be, of Sin and Redemption; it has animated romance and fiction in all the ages of the world; in the Homeric Circe and her swine; in the mediæval Launcelot and Guinevere; in that greatest com-

position of the recent century, where a man from a noble blameless life descends to lowest depths of sensuality ; then is reinstated and recovered, rising in the might of Love to penitence, reconciliation, grace.

The text reveals a crisis in one amongst these chess-games. At the moment when the sun rose on Peniel, and Jacob had power over the angel, yet halted on his thigh, his better self had gained the victory, descent and defeat were checked, ascent and rescue were begun. Elsewhere we have it in allegory : the Woman and the Serpent in one Testament, Christ and the Tempter in the other ; in all, the two antagonists stand face to face—here, the *brute* in man, greed, lust, savagery, care for nought but self, obedience to the momentary impulse with no heed to the before or after ; there, the *divinity* in man, sacrifice of the present to the future, conception and worship of the Unseen, love of neighbours superseding love of self ; our Paradise Lost, the soul's degradation and submergence, until from beneath the mask of humanity scowls the visage of the wild beast ; our Paradise Regained, the ascent from low to high, from high to higher, till *God* is seen face to face.

Elsewhere, I say, in allegory ; here, acted out

in the life-history of a single man. Alone, in the gathering darkness, beside the Jabbok ford, Jacob stands at the parting of the ways. Hitherto we have seen him contemptible, sordid, lying; before dawn he has crossed his Rubicon to stand out henceforth dignified, affectionate, unselfish, a Patriarch, Prophet, Prince. As so often in the Bible, change of name marks change of character. His birth name *Jacob*, or the "Cheat," reveals the natural man, but he wrings from God in that all-night wrestle his manhood name of *Israel*, "fighter with and victor over God." Jacob still remains, but Israel predominates: he is *Jacob*, calculating, over-reaching, cheating; he entraps his brother, deceives his father, bargains with God ("If God will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, *then* shall the Lord be my God"); cunning Laban who tries to trick him he outwits with greater craft; contrives and schemes in meeting Esau, distrusts his neighbours at Shechem, disbelieves Joseph's friendly message; stands apart even to the last, doubting and doubted, suspicious and suspected, far from the courtly frankness of Abraham, the facile simplicity of Isaac, the headlong generosity of Esau. He is Jacob, *but also he is Israel*; of

purpose steady, settled, persevering, conquering ; buys his birthright, cozens his blessing, wins his Rachel, builds his future ; his sense of God's presence, canting and hypocritical at Beersheba, is startled into reality at Bethel, is intense and abiding from Peniel ; his earlier self-love expands with love for those about him, for Rebekah, Rachel, Deborah, Joseph, Benjamin, even hard cruel Simeon. From first to last is present in him the intense duality of the character, the grim realism of the conflict ; watching it in its trans-Jordanic epoch we wonder how the game will go ? will the baser elements overpower, or be absorbed into and disappear before the nobler ?

Most interesting, too, and most remarkable to note how this same duality comes out in his descendants. The Jew on his baser side is proverbial, his life's aim money-making by means usurious at the best, dishonest at the worst. The greater Jew thrives on the necessities of nations, the smaller Jew on the necessities of spendthrifts, the ordinary Jew on the ignorance of his customers. It has been so all through history, in the Jew of long ago, as immortally depicted for us in Isaac of York, in Barabbas, and Shylock, timid alike and cautious, fraudu-

lent, and cruel, yet majestic in the endurance and resolve which kept alive an outlawed, outcast race against crushing tyranny and overwhelming odds. It is so in the Jew of to-day. Yonder small Whitechapel tradesman cheats you cunningly across his counter: follow him into the parlour behind the shop; watch his home contentment such as Christians rarely know; hear him lead the evening worship of his family, give Moses' benediction to his children, join in synagogue prayer to which our oldest liturgies are of yesterday—and the snuffling, cringing pettifogger has become a heroic patriarch of old, his sordid shop transformed into the Israel of a domestic altar.

So, to come back to our text once more—we see Jacob in the crucial moment, when in the long life struggle his higher nature fully and finally gained the upper hand. Observe what curious pomp surrounds the narrative; the events all march in pairs, with strange mysterious parallelism:—unseen beside seen, spiritual linked to earthly. Two bands cross Jordan, two hosts (Mahanaim) await them on the other side. He sends messengers before his face, God's messengers or angels meet him. He prepares to see the face of Esau, he sees the

Peniel face of God. Devising how to circumvent his brother he is compelled to fight with God: in that weird wrestling bout the story terminates. What was it? allegory, vision, dream? Hardly, if the lameness be a reality. Was it actual grappling with a supposed celestial visitant, as in wild religious transport Indian Dervishes dislocate their joints to-day, as Luther in the Wartburg Castle, as Balfour of Burley in Scott's grand romance? "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" —that is all we know. Through the darkness of the night the struggle lasted; it is in the dim twilight of thought that Faith lays hold; not from argument, reason, clear conception, but from awe, wonder, worship, passionate belief is borne. In the thick darkness the Lord said that *He* would dwell; the stars which figure Saints show only when the sunlight is withdrawn; the dew of Grace falls in the night, melts before the risen sun. Darkness and silence! till sunrise broke on both. "What is thy name"? To that no answer came: for in God's Name—so men then thought—resides God's power. To every God belongs a secret Name, given to Him at His birth, known only to Himself; to reveal it would be ruin

to His Godhead. Thus taught primitive and even civilised religion.* Egyptian Isis, at first a mortal woman merely, endowed with medical skill and versed in magical arts, practised on the Supreme God, Ra, until she wrung from him his secret name, becoming thereby Queen of Heaven, and reducing Ra to impotence. So cunning Supplanter Jacob, superior in the physical grapple with his Celestial Visitant, would fain become himself a god by capturing the incommunicable name. That was not to be ; he should be God's Conqueror, not God ; Isra-el, not El. He came out victorious though halting—conqueror, yet scarred with battle wounds. Henceforth, from Peniel on to Shechem, Mamre, Egypt, the Macpelah grave, it is Israel rather than Jacob whom we see, until the latest victory is won, the final scars are healed ; till dying as died no other patriarch, swan-like in prophetic burst of song, "the physicians embalmed *Israel*," and he was laid with his great kinsfolk in the land of the birthright which he had sinned to win,—and *won*.

And what marked the crisis ? what began

* See Revelation xix. 12.

the victory? it was the vision of the face of God. To see that face which none might see was the desire of the Patriarch, as to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge was the hope of the Apostle. Like all true champions in Earth's lists, *they* wrestled in darkness till the sun rose high; held the fleet angel fast until he blessed them; by faith and hope, saw God face to face; halting from the strain and cicatrised with the wounds of Life, yet learned the Secret Name;

Come,—O Thou Traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see,
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee;
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

Yield to me now, for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair;
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak,
Be conquered by my instant prayer;
Speak, or Thou never hence shalt move,
And tell me if Thy Name be Love.

My prayer *hath* power with God—the Grace
Unspeakable I now receive;
Through faith, I see Thee face to face,
I see Thee face to face and live;
In vain I have not wept and strove,
Thy nature and Thy name *is*—Love.

JOSEPH'S TEARS

He sought where to weep; and he went into his chamber, and wept there.

MEN do not often weep. To women's more emotional natures tears are a relief; to them

> ——the grief that does not speak,
> Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break;

while men, in proportion as they are masculine, self-contained, reserved, control and shun external signs of feeling, are ashamed of tears. "I *could* play the woman with mine eyes," cries Macduff over his murdered wife and children, but he will not. "Friends, don't let me expose myself," said Walter Scott when in his last illness the pen fell from his nerveless fingers, and the tears rolled down his cheeks—"Friends, don't let me expose myself." So it was here—a man proud, austere, calm, dignified, feels the tearful impulse, cannot resist it, cannot bear any one to see his weakness. "He made haste; sought where to weep; entered into his chamber, and wept there." Four times, we read, he

shrank away to weep; "dared not trust his melting soul but in his Maker's sight"; then at last, alone with his brethren and with Benjamin, his final effort at restraint overcome by Judah's heartrending appeal, the deepest fountains of his soul were broken up; the floods poured forth; "he wept aloud ('gave forth his voice in weeping' says the margin in our Bibles), so that the Egyptians and all the house of Pharaoh heard him." It is Joseph of whom the tale is told: we have all looked upon that life, moving grand, consistent, victorious from the cradle to the grave, his days bound each to each by natural piety; no life in all the Bible—perhaps in all history—more unbroken, more complete, more orbing slowly into perfectness; blessed with outward prosperity and inward peace; in touch historically with our Gentile world; spiritual type of Christ; loved, lowly, tempted, raised; serving his brethren, yet separate from them—separate, as was his great Antitype, heavenward no less than earthward, "my Father and your Father, my God and your God."

As we note his "five weepings"—so Jewish writers call them—we ask what was it that impelled his tears? Home feelings, boyish mem-

ories, family affection? His elder brothers had been brutal, but still they spoke to him of home; Benjamin was his own lost mother's son; towards him his full tide of passionateness gushed forth: on these, on the parental instinct primarily, then on the mutual domestic tenderness which it generates and binds together, all morality is built. All the moral sentiments are based on love, and love came into the world through family, spreading thence to neighbour, tribe, race, mankind, as rings spread out from a pebble breaking the still surface of the lake, but deriving strength and retaining power from that first early passionate childish mutual affection; the fire may burn out at the extremities, it quickens still at the core. A great novelist touches the heart of the most unfeeling of his creations by the recollection of a little sister whom he had loved: distracted, wearied, hardened, there is always a soft spot in the coldest heart for "early days."

> As life wanes, all its cares and strife and toil
> Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees
> Which grew by our youth's home, the waving mass
> Of climbing plants heavy with bloom and dew,
> The morning swallows with their songs like words—
> All these seem dear, and only worth our thoughts.

And it is this strong passion of tears—this

human weakness some may call it—which *completes* our character of Joseph; wins for him our affection as well as our admiring esteem. It is not the only case where capacity for strong feeling and for rapture is approved in Scripture. Think of Jacob over Rachel, Deborah, Benjamin; think of Hannah, David, Rizpah; think of Christ at Lazarus' grave; think of the forlorn penitent who bewept her Master's feet—these win our hearts as that poor woman won her forgiveness by their "loving much."

It is a capacity altogether good to have, altogether right to nurse and sustain by any means. People say sometimes that it is wrong to cry over a beautiful story, to read pathetic fiction; there is enough real sorrow in the world, they think. Common is the common-place, and false! Such tears are wholesome; they keep open our capacity for tenderness. The father who has lost his little one, towards whom once his heart went out, preserves that heart from hardening as he reads of Jacob's tears for Joseph, David's tears for Absalom; the mother whose child has gone far away from home, weeps with Hannah, and weeping, gathers Hannah's comfort; the sister or the wife bereaved hangs not all hopeless over the bier at Nain, over the

grave of Lazarus; the poor outcast penitent woman escapes utter obduracy of despair, as she sees penitent and accepted Magdalen. It is the same with fiction, which is only history idealised. Tears shed with Shakespeare's Constance, Scott's Jeanie Deans, Tennyson's repenting Guinevere, keep tenderness, healing salutary tenderness, from hardening. There is a creed which holds it wrong to make possible these passionate regrets, argues that they prove the dear ones to have been idolised, to have been loved too much. No! love begins with man—God trains the moral faculties towards Himself through men. We cannot love God at all without previous experience of human love; the most passionate lovers of their kind are thereby qualifying for love of God, and to the oft-repeated warning that an idol may be lost or broken, a great poet has given the answer once for all; "Better"—for the moral nature he means—

> —better to have loved and lost,
> Than never to have loved at all;

a principle sound and wholesome as it is poetically phrased. It belies and contradicts the cruel monkish doctrine, the theme of the great Swedish drama, that duty calls us to surrender,

as entangling, all human ties, to forgo human passions, crush out mutual domestic love, so that love and will and service may be given more entirely to God. That is to crush out love itself; to kill love towards man is killing love for God. Give it the outlet God appointed, the outlet Christ indulged, the outlet of *human* love! Without it men are icebergs in the warm sea of human life, repelling, freezing, isolated; without it none can melt or move his fellows; no one ever touched men's hearts unless he were or had been a strong and passionate lover; no writer sways men's souls unless he has the art, born out of his own passionateness, to win their smiles and tears. Affection—strong, constant, idolising affection—cramps neither faith nor intellect; its want is a defect, its fulness is a glory. Strong is will, strong is brain, stronger than both is the deep, tender heart beneath. Strong human sorrow is sanctified—for Jesus wept; strong human affection is justified—for John lay on Jesus' bosom.

So, then, here is a cloud of witnesses—Joseph, Jacob, Hannah, David, Christ—to passionate domestic tenderness, devoted constant friendship, as the basis of the moral virtues, the avenue

to Godward love. To have and love our nearest and our dearest is part of God's plan to educate souls, is the oldest child of religion. Not untruthfully have good men seen a type of heaven in a happy family home. "If you want," says a passionately religious yet deeply human teacher; "If you want a picture of what religious Christian Godward love may be, you may see it in some family groups, in the cottage quite as much as in the mansion. There, when the working day is over, sits the father; there is the mother with ready smile for all, though not perhaps without some Martha-cares to wait upon; there is the boy at his book and the girl at her work; and over the whole broods a deep peace, a deep sense of joy, as in true continual worship. All are bound together by unspoken deep affection, and the sweet and holy incense is for ever going up to God, of a quiet, grateful, homely, unthought-of mutual self sacrifice, each living for the other's good on earth, and living *all* for the Father which is in Heaven."

THE MOUNT OF AARON

Aaron died—there—in the top of the Mount.

THIS is the only passage in the Old Testament which makes us feel personal interest in Aaron. Running our minds back over the story, we shall recall no one occasion on which he, in his own character, says or does anything significant, exercises any influence on the people, stands out in any sense as a spiritual representative and chief. He is introduced to us as the eloquent orator who is to be the spokesman of the Almighty to Pharaoh and to the Israelites, yet we never once hear of him as opening his lips with force. Twice, indeed, he acts apart from Moses; once when, weakly yielding to pressure, he inaugurates the idolatry of the golden calf with its profligate attendant ceremonies; again when he cabals with his sister Miriam in a petty domestic conspiracy against his brother's wife. When a resolute earthly minister and coadjutor is wanted, Moses turns not to Aaron but to Joshua; when a deadly

scandal agitates the host, and they pause to listen for the thunder of righteous indignation which should break from the lips of the Spiritual Leader, it is not Aaron but his young grandson, Phineas, who starts forward as the champion of God, and appeases the wrath of the Most High by an act of judicial vengeance. Moses fights the High-priest's battles, champions his authority, directs his minutest acts; throughout the narrative, though the two are almost always mentioned in conjunction, the whole individuality lies in the younger brother; the elder is a mere lay-figure draped in priestly robes, and mechanising priestly functions.

It was no doubt with consummate wisdom that a dull and feeble man like Aaron was chosen for the High-priesthood. To the vast majority of minds a depository of supernatural power which works, or is supposed to work, in regular sacramental channels loses rather than gains by individual force of character. In the history of Christian and other Churches, the most effective Bishops, the most successful Popes, the most honoured Caliphs, have been commonplace, conventional, second-rate men; the ruler of the greatest Church in all the world, a body of religionists who outnumber Christian

worshippers twice over, is a figure kept in strict seclusion, and whom no one ever sees. And, on the other hand, spiritual rulers of mental and moral energy have uprooted and rejected ceremonial piety and order, from Paul's condemnation of Sabbaths and Fast days and Jubilees as weak and beggarly elements, down to the scornful repudiation, by a Luther or a Latimer, of the fables, superstitions, and profanities which vitiated papal Christianity. A church, a religion, a worship, is founded by men of passionate and earnest genius who draw all others after them. They pass away; their successors grasp their outward methods and machinery and miss their uninheritable spirit. The framework is kept perfect, and for that feeble men suffice; to reinvigorate it with its Founder's genius would be to rend its form asunder; as Christ rent Judaism asunder—as some great Christlike soul will in days to come rend our popular Christianity asunder.

If Aaron's life were colourless, no such word can be spoken of his death—as Shakespeare says of the rebel Scottish thane—

> nothing in his life
> Became him like the leaving it!

Picture to yourselves the scene described to

us. The forty years of wandering were drawing to an end; the host had passed halfway down the wide desert valley of the Arabah on the way to its final encampment in the Moab meadows skirting Jordan, and had halted beside Mount Hor,—the "Mount of Aaron," as the Arabs call it still, rising to-day from the ruins of that strange "rose-red city half as old as Time," not reared with stone or brick like other cities, but hewn out of the soft sandstone mountain flank. Up this mountain, not lofty as men speak of mountains, but much higher than any English hill, toiled the aged High-priest with his brother and his son, clad in the splendid robes which he was wearing for the last time, in the sight of all the people. Cities and nations and men decay and pass away; but the everlasting hills outlive brief human history; and the traveller of to-day, mounting the higher of the two peaks which form the mountain top, may gaze upon the very scene in all its absolutely unchanged details which met the eye of Aaron. They see the long sandy valley in the south, closed by the shimmer of the distant Red Sea waters, and the white limestone western hills amid which, during all these years, the host had wandered to and fro; but not to

them does the view, as it did to him, map out the history of a life. To him the sea, the mountain, and the desert were in that moment vocal of his past. They spoke to him of his Egyptian home, of his struggles with Pharaoh, of the thunders of Sinai, of the slow growth of that mighty ceremonial in which he played the highest part, of his strange double life,—to the host, God's representative and vicar; to himself, a feeble, ordinary, ungifted man,—of the hoped-for rest and promise which had hung before his mind so long, but which his eyes should never see. For now the end was come. He who had so often passed behind the veil in atonement for the sins of others was about to carry his own before the eternal Throne; as one by one the breastplate and the ephod and the mitre and the golden bells and pomegranates were drawn off him, his priestly consequence fell off too; he saw—strange sight to one still living—his son clothed in the office from which he had passed away, and then, on the top of the mount, he died. To some men death comes dreadful, laying an icy grip on energies still hot and strong, stifling schemes half completed, shattering happiness intensely felt. To others he is gentle and welcome: closing life-long struggles, ending

keen anxieties, relieving unspeakable weariness; "he folds us in his arms as our mother did, and our last hour of discerning is like our first." Such, we may believe, it was to Aaron. Brother and son went down the hill, the one to exercise his new-born honours, the other to take up again for yet a few weeks more the burden of his one hundred and twenty years; but Aaron—died, there, in the top of the mount.

We, too, shall ascend Mount Hor some day. A time will come to us when our busy march stands still, when all the schemes and labours and desires which throng our brains and hurry us to and fro from day to day will halt; for old age or sickness will have laid us low, and we shall be face to face with death. Then in the quiet watchful hours we shall look back, as from a height, upon the wanderings of all our lives. Our childish homes, our schooldays, our manhood, will pass before us one by one, while many a long-forgotten incident and circumstance comes back to us as we gaze. We shall see our temptations and falls, our deeds of courage and steadfastness; the help we gave to others or the offences which we caused them; yet, looking forward now to such a time, we know no more than this, that we shall wish then that in

our busy lives the thought of such a retrospect could have been present with us betimes, shall wish each eminence and valley of the past, over which with rapid resumption of every association they wrap up, our dying gaze will roam, could be eloquent of duty done, not shirked; of leadership in nobleness, not sin; of sacrifice to others, not to self. Hor and Pisgah—Aaron and Moses—two aged brothers gazing on the same backward landscape within a few weeks of their closing lives!—but the filmed eyesight of the one ending in a level useless past, horizoned with the house of bondage; the rapt gaze of the other turning from a past grandly vocal of men's gratitude and love, on to the promised future, which from the golden hills of heaven he will afford well to forgo, but which the people who had looked to him would owe to his self-denial, courage, perseverance. There are great ones in the page of history whose end was, as we can see, the end of Aaron; they used place, power, wealth, influence for themselves; these fell from them like the gorgeous High-priest's robes; and naked, shuddering, degraded, their littleness and their failure were revealed to them too late. And in the same historic page we see the spiritual

sons of Moses on their Pisgah height; turning with grand abnegation from the visible splendour of a long past life, a life of useful leadership as statesman, teacher, discoverer, to view from the height of long experience the solution of those problems in the future which they may not live to solve themselves. For them the ascent of Aaron's Mount will have no terrors, since the view will be very pleasant, and the top will not be lonely. The friends and scenes of life will pass away from them, as Moses and Eleazar descended from their dying friend; but the glory of the Lord will come down upon the Mount, and they will pass within it.

BALAAM

Let me die the death of the righteous.

If Christ be the Sun in heaven, as the Bible loves to call Him, then the heroes, saints, prophets, warriors of the Old and New Testament are the Stars. Various they are as the stars. Some, like Abraham, Moses, Samuel, lead settled regular human lives, rising and setting, passing across the sacred page in calculated order, like Planets in their courses. Some, like Elijah, sweep past in a strange eccentric intermittent course; rise we know not whence, describe irregular orbits, vanish we know not whither—they are the Comets of the historic field. Some, lastly, are like August or November Meteors; flash out for a moment, startle by their brilliancy, fall to earth or dissolve in air, extinguished as though they had never been. Such a one is Balaam.

Once a year he comes before us: we feel that we must talk of him, for he eclipses all the other Scriptures of the day; meteor though he be, he

fills the sky. We know not whence the story was obtained, from a Moabitish or an Assyrian source; some facts only Balaam himself could have recorded; others, such as the speaking ass and the vision of the angel, are essentially pagan, not Israelite fancies. It forms, I think, at once the grandest episode in the Mosaic record, and the highest train of inspiration in all the Historical books. It is the first prophetic outlook beyond Israel into the world at large; from that Pisgah height we have a predictive glance at once to Gentile East and Gentile West. We are held too by the splendour of the poetry, Homeric rather than Hebrew in its amplitude, iteration, ring;—nor less, by the picturesqueness of the narrative; the two embassies, the journey, the arresting angel; king and prophet climbing from peak to peak, prophet waiting solitary for the word of God to fall.

> Oh! for a sculptor's hand
> That thou mightst take thy stand,
> Thy wild hair floating on the Eastern breeze;
> Thy tranced yet open gaze
> Fixed on the desert haze
> As one who deep in heaven some airy pageant sees.

And observe ere we follow him further that this inspired Prophet was a Pagan. People are apt to think that God's spirit fell

only on the Jewish and the Christian Church; that Inspiration was confined to Old Testament Prophets and New Testament Apostles. Not so. Balaam was a foreigner, a Gentile, scion of an idolatrous race; yet fire from the altar burned in him as high as, nay higher than, in Moses. Wherever intellectual and imaginative force grow together in a human soul, there come from time to time grand bursts of utterance, rapt insight, impulse uncontrolled, to attest the presence of God's spirit.

> Not by Eastern windows only,
> When daylight dawns, comes in the light.

Before the Prophets of Israel, since the Apostles of Christ, the voice of orator, poet, writer, preacher, has come on rushing mighty wind, to illuminate, persuade, convert. Note, too, that the inspired soul is no mere machine, no passive instrument in the hand of God, taken up by Him as a man wields pen, pencil, graving tool; inspiration works ever on previous thought, sagacity, seership; it does not create, it only shapes and swells; it is the breath pressing into the organ, not the keyboard at which the player sits. Read attentively and you will see that Balaam was a man of trained intellect, poetic culture, wide reading and knowledge;

was no stranger to this "people come out of Egypt," had measured the force of Israel, heard of its marvels, watched its course, divined its irresistible might, its superiority to the elder races it was encountering. Then, when he gazes on the endless host, a million folk in marshalled foursquare bannered camp, his mind inflamed with sacrificial rites, and expectant of divine influence from without, the conviction he had already formed rushes forth, in *poetry*—"How goodly are thy tents"—in *prophecy*—"I shall see him but not nigh"—lastly in reluctant final *blessing*—

> Like the patriarch of old
> Who stood on Zophim, heaven-controlled,
> O'er-mastered yet by high behest;
> I bless thee and thou shalt be blessed.

Then, where is there a character, showing as Balaam shows, like clockworks through a crystal case, the maze of mingled motives, of conflicting good and evil, making up the compound of a human soul? Three great religious men, Bishop Butler, Dr. Arnold, John Henry Newman, standing at different times before the story, have told the special thought which it flashed upon the intelligence of each. The first discerns in it *man's power of self-deception.*

Balaam at starting clearly sees and does the right—"Get you into your land, for the Lord refuseth." Tempted by the second embassy, hankering after the silver and gold in Balak's house, he will experiment on God's indulgence —"Tarry this night that I may know what the Lord will say unto me *more*." He extorts a displeased permission—"If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; but yet" —he goes with loud professions of loyalty such as men often utter when they contemplate treason, goes with princes of Moab. The angel stops and threatens him—he *offers* to go back instead of going back—"If it displease thee, I *will* get me back again"—goes on to the end nevertheless, reaches the Arnon border where Balak was awaiting him; treads the path of disobedience, professing obedience all the time; so sins for nothing, does wrong and gets no reward, does right and gets no credit, angers Balak, angers God. So it is. We recognise at once the face of conscience, duty, God. Instead of acting in its light we hesitate; let in the reasoner; enter on self-deception; dim the lineaments of duty; go to the feast without the wedding-garment; self-satisfied till God comes in to see the guests—then, speechless!

And the second writer sees in Balaam's story a noble course darkened and spoiled by cravings of ambition and of pelf. At first a man is independent, uncorrupt, steadfast, careless of angering others or of injuring himself so long as he is pleasing God. Promotion lights upon him; he becomes judicious, double, dexterous; reconciles duty with advancement; of course he will not belie his convictions, but he need not shout them out, not unnecessarily offend, not forfeit by untimely and uncalled-for utterance preferment to yet higher spheres, in which he may minister to God's glory more effectively. Or the silver and gold lay hold of him; he gains entrance to some line of business, outwardly reputable and fair, but moving out of sight in crooked ways and fed by questionable machinery. He argues, like Balaam, with his former resolute self. The thing is there; he found it, did not make it. It is one thing to create a sinful precedent, quite another to accept an established enterprise, which others would work if he abstained. "The *money* has no bad odour," as the Roman Emperor said; he will not care from whence it comes; nay, he will use it to God's glory in advancing pious schemes. So, in either case, he falls away; stifles con-

science, argues down reluctance, quenches the old pure instinct, commits spiritual suicide; a lost leader to those who followed him, a broken idol to those who reverenced in him God's image undefiled.

And the third learns sadly, while he reads and ponders, that sound religious belief is consistent with a low standard of action. A man shall be concerning the law blameless, shall hold all points of orthodoxy, pray with fervour, wield and express in all sincerity those utterances of creed, those shibboleths of experience, those apprehensions of Sacramental or of Atoning Grace, which some call the essence of religion, while sin all the time is festering out of sight. There are dark deeds in the secret parts for which no restitution has been made; a lower life flowing on side by side with high profession, like blue clear Rhone and muddy Saône, between the same banks, in southern France, vitiating the life into corruption habitual and ingrained, until the actor reaches that lowest depth of Pharisaism in which the hypocrite is unconscious of his own hypocrisy.

All these deep truths, after the Old Testament habit of teaching by example, not by precept, are distilled for us from this wonderful

Balaam story. And yet our hearts go out to him as we read his prayer, touching, unexpected, human. He sees the serried host of Israel below him, religious and god-fearing; for yonder is the many-coloured tabernacle and the smoking altar; and the hymnody of the silver trumpets floats up to his ears; prosperous and multiplied, fulfilling what his words show him to have remembered, God's promise to his own Chaldee countryman Abraham. Those ancient patriarchs served God and fell asleep—*therefore* as the dust of the earth is their posterity. Happy they!—happy these their children! happy in life and death! Let me die the death of the righteous! So his compelled, his envious blessing falls upon them. Turn a page or two, and we find him scheming to pollute this righteousness and to alienate these blessings by tempting Israel to sin idolatrous and impure. Set his acts against his words, and we have the type of unperforming and so unreal professors, of men who negotiate their deliverance by sacrifice, rather than obedience; by avowal of belief rather than by deeds of duty. It is possible to forget Christ's life in His death; to ask ourself and others not, "Have you lived the life of Christ?" but "Have you appro-

priated the merits of the death of Christ?" not, have you worked out your own salvation as the Apostle bids, but have you wrought in yourself the belief that your salvation is worked out by another? The Lord bade me work in His vineyard; but as I lounge idle in the market-place and see Him pass, I feel such thrills of love and homage, I see in Him so sweet a Saviour, I fall at His feet so confidently, I shriek so loudly, "Lord, Lord," and proclaim my faith in His acceptance, that He must needs let me in, must give the penny at the day's end, because I loved the Master, not because I did His bidding. Is that so sure? Will He take the emotion for the duty, set the ecstasy against the disobedience? Will He not say sternly (for He can be stern)—I gave you laborious work to be done, not hysterical emotion to be worked up—Cast out the unprofitable servant! I understand deep spiritual experiences; I know that passionate emotion may hang like a lovely blossom on the stem of a holy life, that patient well-doing may have its recompense in consciousness of Christ's smile and in tender effort to win others to the sight of it, as the healed mothers in the Arabah bore their little ones to gaze upon the brazen serpent too; but the Balaam story

warns with all its picturesque yet tragic force not to confuse the emotion which *springs from* a holy life with the emotion which is *substituted* for it. "Come and be saved!" yes—but first survey your life; cast your sins behind you; see if you have done the task God set, and if not, *do it.* Then in pauses of your Christian work and for refreshment in your many struggles expect assurance of salvation;—but if you think to earn the death of the righteous man by claiming it in passionate language and by clamouring your certainty that it will be yours—remember Balaam's prayer—remember Balaam's end!

THE WITNESS OF THE STONE *

This stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard.

OPEN your mind's eye upon the fairest spot in the Holy Land, the beautiful Vale of Shechem. North and south are the high ranges of Ebal and Gerizim; between them a narrow valley, sometimes only a few hundred feet in width; green with grass, gay with olives, intersected everywhere with running streams; the hill tops and the landscape, unlike the hard clear-cut distances which prevail elsewhere, softened like an English view by the delicate tints which moisture spreads over scenery; at the end a white town nestling in the verdure, which to-day is called Nablous, and stands where once stood Shechem.

To the student of Holy Scripture the place is dear for its associations no less than for its beauty. It links together many scenes, each one of deepest interest. No town stood there when Abraham halted on the spot, fresh from

* A Farewell Sermon to Boys.

his Chaldean home. Under one of the terebinths or Turkish oaks, which have long disappeared from the valley, but still stand huge and single here and there in the surrounding country, he built the first altar to his God which the land had known. A hundred and eighty years had passed when his grandson Jacob, descending from Gilead through the deep ravine of Jabbok, found there a city with its king and people; pitched his tents before it, and bought the parcel of the field in which the embalmed remains of Joseph came afterwards to lie. From these, or from even earlier connections, the place gained and kept peculiar sanctity. Hither came the host of Israel, just after the siege of Ai, to utter in responsive choruses the blessings and the curses which Moses had enjoined. Here met the tribes in after years to make Abimelech Judge and to make Rehoboam King; here stood and stands the shrine of the Samaritan worship; here by the edge of a well, whose ruins are still shown, Christ sate in talk with the woman of Samaria, and gazed out upon the plain of waving corn beyond.

Having taken in the features and associations of the place, let us turn to the scene fixed there by the Joshua record. They were the last

utterance of a man whose days on earth were run, and who spoke from that commanding eminence which looks at once upon the clearness of the earthly past and the dimness of the heavenly future; with the wisdom of aged experience, and the awe of coming death. He looked back upon nigh eighty years of active public life. For half that time he had been the lieutenant and minister of Moses in the desert wanderings; through its later years he had been the sole captain and vice-regent of the hosts of Israel; their leader in many battles, the planter of their tribal homes, the organiser and shaper of the unwonted national life that found itself in a settled place which they could call their own. He stood amongst them, a monumental relic of the times pushed back, by a stirring century of change, into remote history; one who had toiled in Egyptian quarries, had crossed the sand of the Red Sea, had shrunk from the thunders of Sinai. Only one white-haired elder could recollect the time when he was not a leader and a prince; and in every event of his historic life, in the fight with the Amalekites, the adventure of the spies, the siege of Jericho, the death of Achan, the battlefield of Ajalon, he had stood before them as the *Lord's* captain; as asserting in all

his acts the supremacy of Israel's unseen God; as guiding all the love and loyalty the people bore himself, into the channel of piety and devotion to the Most High.

And he met with his reward, the highest that life can yield: he turned many to righteousness. All through his reign we hear of no idolatry, no alliance with the heathen, no counterfeit and private priesthoods, no worship in high places; none of those transgressions which so often challenged God's vengeance in the later history of the race. His personal example and authority had held the traditions of Sinai unbroken, had kept worship and religion pure. And now that his days were numbered and he felt life ebbing from him, his last thought was for the continuance of that devout God-fearing life which he had maintained so long among them. In solemn conclave with all the rulers of the people he collected his dying breath to warn them against apostasy and disobedience. "And the people said unto Joshua—The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of

the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." A witness it long remained; so long as the elders who had sworn to that covenant survived, Israel served the Lord; and long afterwards, late in the history of the Judges, we find the oak of the pillar which was at Shechem a marked national monument, still speaking to a far-off generation of that which it had seen and heard.

"It hath heard and seen!" The mute objects amongst which we live, the surroundings of our daily life, have eyes as keen to see and tongues as clear to speak of what they see as the men and women with whom our lot is cast. Our intellectual sentiment finds no choicer food than the battlefield where a nation won its liberty, the home of a great man's life, the Calvary of a martyr's death; nothing stirs our moral selves so deeply as a visit to the haunts we have well known long ago; the Church to which we went as children, the corner where we first stood beside an open grave, the chamber in which we learnt at our mother's knee the simple prayer on which our young religious life was built; all

these have seen; they retain indelibly the pictures of the past, of the persons and the things we saw, of the words we spoke, and of the thoughts we thought, and flash them on us after many years with a vividness as startling as of yesterday.

I spoke of home relics and associations; but the remembrances of school are no less keen and eloquent. The oldest man goes back to the place where the busy years of early youth were crowded with change and eventfulness and growth, to become a boy once more; forgotten facts come up out of the void; forgotten feelings resume their sway; sad remembrances perhaps of the unfaded simplicity and earnestness which no contact with the world had sapped; of schemes for future life contrasted with what that life has been; of past vows too pure to be performed: pleasant remembrances perhaps of innocent happiness and of excitements which left no sting; of early temptations defied, of resolutions made and kept, of a subsequent life of purity and inward peace, whose discipline was born and nursed in boyhood. And if all parts of our old school are full of the things which they have seen, if memories of our games, our intimacies, our work, our successes, meet us at

every turn, to many of us the quintessence of them all lies here: in the House of God which saw us daily on our knees; in which all that was best and noblest in our training, our self-discipline, our development, put on the halo of religious feeling, condensed itself into the central thought of loving and of serving God. I remember when this Chapel was first used, more than seven years ago, I uttered a prayer that those who should go forth into the world from within our walls might cherish deep down in their hearts, as an everflowing spring of purity and tenderness and devotion, the recollection of the solemn services enjoyed and of the solemn counsels uttered here. Since then what consecration it has undergone in the tide of worship which has flowed through it, consecration due not to chanted harmonies and recited prayers so much as to the aspiration heavenward of individual souls, touched by the spirit of holy rites, or the fervour of solemn entreaties, or the contagion of reverent neighbours. Four generations of boys have stood here in turn to take upon them their Confirmation vows, and have ate and drunk together for the first time at yonder Table of the Lord. There too, month after month, our older Communicants have met;

not, I believe and feel, as matter of pious routine or of school decency, but after days of preparation and self-communion, of making up accounts with God, of seeking fresh help and strength in the consciousness of His near Presence, which is the highest sacramental blessing.

Here, lastly, Sunday after Sunday in succession, almost unbroken throughout these years, have been delivered from this spot words of exhortation, of remonstrance, of encouragement, of advice—words feeble and imperfect and stammering, as I know best of all, marred by the weakness of the speaker, by the pressure of conflicting anxieties, by the shortness of time for preparation; but never once uttered, I do believe, without a deep sense of the responsibility of the sower, and an earnest prayer for the vegetation and vitality of the seed. All this these walls have seen and heard. They have seen the glistening eye and quivering lip which marked the intense feeling of the new communicants; the reverent awe and collected mien of the older ones; have seen deeper still into hearts laid bare before the throne; the sins remembered and confessed, the vows conceived and registered, the lives purified and strengthened;—all that tumultuous depth of inner life

which often surges beneath an unmoved outside, a change of soul working outwards into life and habit, building a new character and regenerating the old. The geologist gazes on an excavation which lays bare the past, and sees it hung with pictures of a former world, of death and life, of destruction and repair, of upheaval and renovation. With what pictures do you suppose that, if we had eyes to see them, these narrow walls are hung? of penitence and conviction disintegrating the old and settling in its stead the new; of the ebb and flow of religious life; of the struggling outbreaks of God's spirit and calming of His grace. Each of you, as he hears me, sees before him pictures of his own past religious experience here; God only, who was amongst us when we prayed and listened and vowed and strove, sees and knows the whole. Yet I have heard from the lips of some who have been here how the influences of their chapel worship kept alive in them spiritual emotion and overflowed into their daily lives; I feel that amongst the seeds scattered through all these years many must have found such fruitful soil; and of all the blessings and encouragements which our school life has yielded to myself I thank God most of

all for this our central Bethel; for the public ceremonial worship which has concentrated our floating devotions, and burnt them into our souls; for the memories which in years to come will haunt myself and you as with angelic presence; rising up in times of temptation, of weakness, or of downfall, to remind us of the resolution made, the earnestness felt and shown, the peace and happiness attained which this our House of God has seen.

And now—while every word I utter brings me nearer to the closing knell of "never more"—how shall I say farewell? how gather up into a closing utterance the reminders, the advice, the prayers, that can never pass from me to you again? I will end in the words with which I began—"This stone shall be a witness unto us." Gather up all that has been best and purest in your school years with the memory of your chapel life. Think of your Confirmation vows:—of that communion, more solemn even than most, at which we knelt together three days ago; of this last time in which most of you will pray and listen here. Use the memory as a talisman against evil; set it up as a standard which you have once attained, and which will witness against you when you fall away.

Many have been the happy scenes which rise before me when I look into the past: pride in discipline and work—joy at successful triumphs and achievements—the conviction of individual regard and love won and answered—of pupils passing into friends. But no memories are so intense to me, none stand out with such abiding preciousness, as the thought of earnest faces moved by chapel counsels, of religious life revealed in chapel devotion, of the peace of God falling into touched and reverent hearts when our happy Sunday services had done their work. Scattered as we shall be in a few days to meet rarely or not at all again, let this be our bond of fellowship. It will bind us together by links of piety, no less than of sentiment; will illustrate that sacred communion all enjoy, albeit not saints as yet, who have taught and listened mutually, have joined in prayer and praise;—will foreshadow that final union which shall both justify and end all partings, sorrows, disappointments; the union of those who have striven together to love and please Him here, before the throne of God.

THE THREE NEIGHBOURS

The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.

THREE neighbours, living in adjacent spots of Northern Palestine, are brought together in the opening of this story; they will come together again at a tragic crisis in their lives. The first lived at Kedesh, amongst the hills of Naphthali—a city once popular and sacred, still crowded with a vast range of ruined ancient tombs. In this sanctuary dwelt a chief of widespread fame, who bore the significant name of Barak, or the "Lightning flash," as of one swift to strike and deadly to destroy. Higher up on a hill above lake Merom stood Harosheth, or "the Quarries," where abode in kingly state Sisera, the great general of the Phœnician armies. Lastly, a day's journey from both, on a green height shaded with trees, was encamped an Arab tribe, (removed for some reason from their Kenite home beside the far-off Dead Sea) whose chief was Heber, its yet more famous chieftainess

was Jael, "the Gazelle"—a lithe comely active dark-skinned beauty one imagines her, Queen of a Bedouin tribe, on terms of friendly peace with both Sisera and Barak.

If Jael be the type of the Arab princess, we have a higher type of womankind in the Hebrew Deborah. Women play a notable part in Jewish life. They are not secluded as in Eastern harems, not under respectful pretexts disqualified and set aside as in western civilisation of to-day. They rank as mates of men, always independent, often superior, sometimes defiant. Run your minds over the Matriarchs of Old Testament story: Miriam, Achsah, Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, Rizpah, Jezebel, the Shunammite, Esther, the mother of the Maccabees, Judith, Mariamne; think how varied and how forcible is the speciality of each; imperious queenliness, or heroic patriotism, tender or frantic maternal love, pious self-devotion, adroit coquetry, domestic perfectness, daring murderous courage, bold unsexed fiendish wickedness. Not least amongst them is Deborah—the "Queen Bee" the word signifies—her home beneath a palm tree near Bethel, to which come all Israel as to an elected Queen and Judge. I suppose that a greatly gifted woman in royal place fulfils our highest

ideal of sovereignty, including a stronger touch of personal feeling than does a man; popular loyalty sentimentalised by sex, her own love for her people intensified by motherliness. Our thoughts yield examples of this in Valleda the German, Boadicea the British heroine, animating their people against the Romans, in Joan of Arc driving the English out of France, in Elizabeth at Tilbury, Maria Theresa the Empress Queen. And I am old enough to recall the revived feeling of reverence for our English throne, a feeling well nigh worn out by the mad King, the bad King, the foolish King, who had occupied it successively for many years, when the fair girl of nineteen, so long spared to our admiring regard, took her seat upon it just seventy-five years ago. Greater than the best of these was Deborah, Queen, not by descent, but by a people's choice—a guide of manlike wisdom to whom all in difficulty resorted, no less than what she proudly calls herself, a "Mother in Israel."

Trouble had fallen upon the country. The powerful Phœnician Kings, subdued by Joshua long before, had recovered themselves and occupied the land. The high roads were unfrequented; the people were disarmed. It was

Deborah who roused them to revolt. She summons Barak to her presence, bids him collect men and meet her on the green flat wide hill-top of Tabor. Her song describes the gathering of the clan: Ephraim from its capital of Amalek, Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar, Naphthali. Reuben stayed away amongst his sheepfolds, Dan and Asher in the shipping and fishing of the creeks or "breaches" on the western coast; the rest came—ready to throw away their lives; princes on white asses, humbler men on foot; they chose new gods or generals—met at the trysting place 10,000 strong, with Deborah to animate, Barak to lead, Jehovah, as they believed, to sustain them. Tabor looks down upon the wide plain of Esdraelon; thither, under Sisera, came the Canaanite host, moving westward to the level ground where Kishon rises, and where their iron chariots had room to operate. To encounter them marched Barak's little army; and just at the shock of joining battle a tremendous storm of sleet and rain, as Josephus tells us, gathering from the east, burst full in the faces of the Canaanites, blinding their eyes, crippling their hands, slacking their bowstrings—the stars in their courses, says the song, fought against Sisera. Torrents

of rain swelled the Kishon springs into a flood, the chariots sunk and floundered in the swampy ground, the horse's hoofs were broken in the struggles to get forth. The whole army fled; eastward, past the Endor village on the side of little Hermon; the victors pursued and cut them down, each village pouring forth its men to slay the fugitives, till, as the Psalmist sang long afterwards, the enemy "perished at Endor and became as the dung of the earth." The scene now shifts to the palace of Sisera; at the high latticed harem window sit his mother and her ladies, on the outlook for the war-chariot of their hero, counting over the spoils which he will bring home, the rich embroidery, the female slaves. That chariot would never come; it was rusting on the banks of Kishon; its master lay dead at Jael's feet, a tent peg through his shattered brain. Nowhere is a more vivid story told, even in Hebrew narrative; the weary general lying down confident in Arab fidelity, refreshed by thick sweet milk from the lordly dish, sunk in deep secure dreamless sleep; the stealthy approach of the chieftainess, the blow after blow from the strong accustomed arm, the three-fold contortion of convulsive agony as he rolled from the low divan

—" bowed—lay down—at her feet he lay down dead "—till she summons Barak into the tent, and for the last time the three neighbours meet.

In the splendid chapters which commemorate the story, narrative and song are interwoven. The hymn of Deborah is the one burst of inspiration in the Book of Judges—the one prophetic blast between the times of Moses and of Samuel. It is fed by the spirit and the eloquence of freedom, independence, national unity against tyranny and oppression. All healthy hearts beat high in harmony with a people fighting for its life and home; and here religion animated patriotism. To this fact I think we must look for an explanation of the incident, so painful to many minds, that inspiration, through the life of Deborah, blesses Jael's crime. A heinous crime it was to us who know only the bloody deed—a breach of friendliness towards an ally, a violation of natural law, a sin especially against binding Arab usage. What terrible motive may have been behind to transform the gazelle into a tigress we cannot tell, though Jewish writers are not slow to guess; but taking it as it stands, we ask—*does* Inspiration justify and praise coldblooded murder? The question,

raised as it is often raised indignantly, misconceives the nature of Inspiration. Inspiration does not supersede, but raises strong emotion and trained utterance to a supernatural height; does not guarantee truth, predict infallibly, or anticipate future Science or Morality. It ever took as it found it human knowledge, character, belief; accepted historical statements which later research has disproved, illuminated unrighteous men and glorified questionable acts—a Joshua invading and annexing Palestine with his robber horde, a Samuel hewing Agag limb from limb, a David treacherous and cruel, a Job of scanty faith, a Solomon doting and idolatrous, a Deborah's savage curse on Meroz or misplaced blessing on Jael. Remember this, and the difficulty disappears. Deborah was first of all a patriot, and cursed the skulking town which closed its gates when help was vital to its brethren jeoparding their lives unto the death; then she was a mother in Israel, and blessed the hand which struck down the oppressor of her children, as the Psalmist blessed the hand which dashed against the stones the infants of injurious bloody Babylon. There was primæval chaos in the spiritual as in the physical world; the proplastic waves which in the

beginning swelled *against*, yet *towards*, the Spirit brooding on the dark undivided waters, typify the fierce ferment in the affections and the passions of half savage man which yet the spirit sways, tolerating their brute ignorance and incomplete morality, rejoicing, as here, in their vehement self-devotion not only to race and home, but to the Lord Jehovah, whose name, as you may observe, opens and ends this grand religious strain.

We live in riper ages. The mists which enwrapped those patriarchal days have cleared away for us. The new Commandment bids fulfil a new ideal of religion and of patriotism by love—love in sentiment and deed; love which works not, wishes not, its neighbour ill; love which bears, believes, endures, and hopes; which purges nationalism from greed, wields no curses, sheds no blood, seeks no revenge, even on behalf of God. The Christian cannot utter, dare not approve those wild anathemas or yet wilder blessings of the Queen Bee of Israel; let us look to it that amid our nobler estimate of our brother's claims, our more lenient tolerance of our brother's trespasses, we fall not ourselves below the self-oblivion, fealty, loftiness, devotion to Jehovah's service, which lifted

those half-taught heroes and heroines of the olden times to the acceptance and impress, at once approving or condoning, of Jehovah's spirit.

KING SAUL

How are the mighty fallen!

From the narrative which closes with this splendid dirge three characters of highest rank stand out: David, Samuel, Saul. Samuel represents the old conservative order of theocratic and patriarchal rule, passing away with himself; David foreshadows the hopeful incoming of a new civilisation, religion, literature, as yet only just above the horizon of the future; between the two stands Saul, unrepresentative, grim, terrible. He is the most *tragic* character in the Old Testament records; historically tragic in the solitary awfulness of his might and the unutterable pathos of his fall; yet more ethically tragic; a soul of noblest endowments and highest aspirations struggling against and overborne by surroundings, duties, claims to which his nature was unequal. It is the theme of the old Greek tragedians; they lay it on an irresistible cruel overruling Fate. It is the theme of Shakespeare; he bares the

springs of moral and mental weakness causing it. It is the theme of the Hebrew historian; he sees in it the contest between a good and evil Spirit from the Lord.

Yet, again, the story is not only tragic but obscure; the faults which vitiated Saul's nobleness did not lie upon the surface; the hasty sacrifice in the field, the reservation of Agag for a triumphant service, seem incommensurate with the unreversible penalty of rejection; allowance seems to be required as we read, for broken details, for contemporary superstition, for the one-sided prophetic bias of the writer. Let us try to understand it; if part shall remain still unsolved yet sidelights of potent value stream upon us from the narrative as we study.

The epoch of Saul's appearance was critical—transition from a communistic to a central polity, from anarchist license to the rigour of settled rule. Samuel was unequal to the task of shaping it; it needed gifts denied to him—gifts of personality, gifts of statesmanship; he would be invaluable behind a throne; he could not fill it. But the choice of the King was left to him, and he chose with wisdom. The new King should be from the tribe of Benjamin—"little Benjamin"—the only tribe which from its

smallness could excite no jealousy; and he should be what appeals especially to a primitive race—of gigantic bulk and stature. And here we want the story amplified; it seems to us as we read its meagre text that Saul's quest after the lost asses was not the first interview between himself and Samuel; that again their communing on the top of the house involved a much longer period of initiation and of training. Anyhow the young man rose to his new position; the words of Samuel charged him with electric force; a change, a "conversion" passed upon him. To those around him he had seemed shy, loutish, clumsy, dull of intelligence, slow in action; "Is Saul among the Prophets?" was the incredulous comment of his acquaintances. But Samuel had seen below the surface. Accepted by the admiring people with the shout "God save the King!" now for the first time heard in history, in a scene which recalls as we read it more than one of the surprises of our greatest novelist, he shows himself from the first enterprising, magnamimous, dignified, modest, simple. By his defeat of the Ammonites at Jabesh, by his victory over the Philistines at Michmash, he becomes absolute and undisputed monarch. As time goes on he moves in kingly

state, the High-priest ever at his right hand, a bodyguard of chosen warriors surrounding him, his mighty spear always in his hand, a diadem of gold around his helmet, and bracelets on his arms; on him and on his house, on Jonathan, noble-hearted, valiant, greatly beloved, the hopes of all Israel were fixed.

It was not to be. He falls; how, we scarcely understand. In a great emergency of the battle-field he offers sacrifice himself instead of waiting for Samuel, that is all; but he is told that he has rejected the Lord, and that his kingdom shall not continue. Conquering Amalek, he reserves the cattle and the King for a great ritual thanksgiving instead of slaying them on the spot. His doom is angrily repeated: Samuel forsakes him, the spirit of the Lord departs from him. He repents—"I have sinned; I pray Thee pardon my sins"; His cry receives no answer. David after a far more heinous sin used the same words and was forgiven; Saul humbled himself but found no place for repentance. How shall we explain it?

Observe that here, as in all the Hebrew records, a dual motive is developed; the historic moves side by side with the prophetic narrative. Historically, it is the familiar conflict between

Church and State, between Crown and Mitre, between royal prerogative and sacerdotal arrogance; a Pope against an Emperor, a Becket against a Henry of Anjou. Samuel's theocratic authority had been absolute; he yielded very reluctantly to the popular demand for a King, hoped that he might rule the King as he had ruled the kingdom; was disobeyed and ignored by him, and so decreed his deposition. Such a struggle, in a superstitious age, can only have one issue. If pontifical claims are universally believed to be divine, Cæsar must go down; Theodosius in his own capital be repelled from the cathedral door by Ambrose, Henry submit himself to be scourged at Becket's tomb. Saul still was King; but he missed the sustaining power he had repudiated, knew no doubt that popular feeling was against him; learned with keen alarm that a successor to himself had been anointed, and that his son and heir was in league with the Pretender; sank into moody sullenness, went hopeless and foredoomed to battle, and there ignobly died. This is the secular, the historic side; but the prophetic parallel supplies a moral and religious sequence. It delineates a man admitted to prophetic inspiration, and conscious of newly awakened powers, derived,

as he believed, through the consecrating unction of a divinely commissioned Seer. This transformation had come to him through Samuel as *Prophet*; his throned authority, his warlike or religious zeal, were to be accompanied and checked by the *moral* force which Samuel's supporting partnership supplied. This he knew; knew that his higher, his novel, his converted self could be retained only while he showed obedience to the prophetic force which had conferred it, and to the man who on God's behalf represented, delegated, engineered that force. In this balance he was twice weighed and twice found wanting. Samuel had bidden him, in God's name, not to sacrifice until he should be at hand to bless the sacrifice and declare the time for battle; he sinned, not in sacrificing, but in preferring sacrifice to obedience. Samuel, in God's name, bid him slay everything in Amalek: when through regal pride or officious ritualistic zeal he overruled this order, that the deferred sacrifice might make a splendid show, it was viewed as a confirmed abandonment of the higher motive and the higher life; it forfeited the privilege of his anointing, broke the covenant, earned the dethronement. From this point we see his character deteriorate. Its grandeur still

is there—read Browning's poem and see—but darkened gradually, as in Milton's Archangel, ruined by remorse and growing savagery. His religious enthusiasm never blended with his moral nature, and now, no longer checked by it, breaks out in wild fanaticism : in the Jephthah-like vow which nearly makes an end of Jonathan, in the unauthorised murder of the Gibeonites and Wizards, in the savage slaughter of the Priests. The naming of his younger children after Moloch and Baal, Melchi-shua, Merib Baal, looks even like avowed revolt against Jehovah. Fits of brooding despair, brief at first and quelled by music, gain in duration and in force, till music becomes hateful to him and he tries to slay the harper. He drives his better angels from him one by one ; Samuel will no longer see him, the High-priest flees for his life, and David is a wanderer on the mountains ; their place taken by the sinister figure of the Edomite Doeg ; at length religious zeal itself breaks up : with the piteous cry, " God is departed from me and answereth me no more neither by prophets nor by dreams," he descends, like Virgil's angry goddess, from supplicating prayer to necromantic sorcery, only to read final doom in the words which the cunning witch, who hated

him, ventriloquised into the mouth of a phantom. He goes to Gilboa as to his doom. The clouds of battle part, and we see him leaning faint and wounded on his spear; his three sons dead beside him; they lift finally to disclose the story of his own death by the hand of the vagabond Amalekite.

"How are the mighty fallen!" He fell, say some, with his sins upon his head; yet in David's inspired dirge his sins find no place. In that exquisite epitaph is no revenge or bitterness, no reprobation or dispraise. It calls up an earlier, brighter recollection of the conqueror beloved by his people, the delight of the daughters of Israel, of the heroism of father and of son, their lives, their undivided deaths. Let *us* think of him so; think of him as Handel must have felt when he penned for him the most moving funeral requiem the world has known. The auspicious and the hapless life alike put human judgment to the hush. If those who believe in the risen *body* think of it, be its texture to their fancy what it may, as freed from the decay which disease or age had worked upon it, clad once again in the strength and beauty of its prime, so let us conceive the risen *soul* which once was great and noble, albeit in life's fight borne down and

foiled ; its baseness somehow purged, its kingliness somehow spiritualised, through the pain-throb of its earthy struggles, by the alchemy of the all-adjusting grave.

DAVID

Thou art the man.

This is from one of the very few parables of the Old Testament; it was in proverb, not in parable, that the wit and wisdom of the old time broke forth. A parable is a fable which, arresting us by its fictitious interest, contains, beside, an afterthought awakening our moral sense for self-approbation or self-blame. We form our judgment on its imaginary acts or persons; then consciousness awakes in us to say, the story might be told of you; the act, the person is your own; *de te fabula narratur*, thou art the man. All fiction has this moral value; besides the intellectual pleasure which it communicates by artificial arrangement of plot, skilful development of character, sparkle of dialogue, picturesqueness and vigour of style, it appeals indirectly to our conscience. Perhaps many of us are not aware to what extent our ideals of conduct have been moulded by some admired heroine or hero in romance even more than in history. The

beauty of this particular fable is incontestable. A famous Elizabethan writer composing a play on the subject of Bathsheba and David, found this parable shape itself almost naturally into limpid verse. But look for a moment at its dexterity. It was a dangerous task, even for a prophet, to convict of adultery and murder an absolute king, with guards and executioners in Eastern fashion by his throne, the worst side of his nature prominent through many past months of unrestrained and unrepented wickedness. So Nathan makes his complaint of another man's misconduct; keeps back all that could startle or alarm; breeds David's interest in the pathetic simple tale; wins pity from the King for an oppressed subject, sympathy from one himself of old a shepherd with the loss of the cherished lamb, indignation generous, passionate and flaming against the pitiless tyrant. Then, when the angry royal sentence falls, of restitution and of death against the criminal, comes like a thunderclap the moral and the meaning of the story—"Thou art the man"—the rich man thou, the poor man thy humble loyal Hittite follower, soldier, servant, the one ewe lamb his young and cherished wife, stainless, blameless, but for thee; worse, far worse thine than the

fabled crime, black not only with sensual impurity but with cowardly merciless outrage, the husband's body slain with horrid treachery, the wife's soul imperilled by thy foul seduction.

The story shows us David at his worst ; lower, it seems to us, he could not fall. But he bent before the prophet's rod ; humbled himself with a broken contrite heart ; took his punishment submissively. Slow and sad was his recovery ; penal suffering dogged his steps henceforth ; the wheels of his life dragged heavily ; but the regeneration, the ascent, the exodus, was sure and faithful ; the battered corrupted life regained, as it closed, the proud title of its maturity : he lives ever in the sacred page as " the man after God's own heart."

And not only in seizing this abysmal moment as the starting-point for renewal and restoration, but in the whole conduct of the marvellous story, David's biographer, whoever he may have been, shows the same constructive skill which we connect with a great romance. The actings of men in the theatre of life Shakespeare distributes into seven ages ; reading attentively you will see that into seven acts or stages David's biography falls. First, we see him as the shepherd lad, short of stature, comely, goodly, " fair of

eyes," with auburn hair, and ruddy cheeks, agile and swift, feet like hart's feet, arms that could break a bow of steel. Readers of Wordsworth recall the beautiful lines which tell how the good Lord Clifford was trained for future greatness in the disguise of a shepherd lad; and so it was with David. For the first time he imparts into literature the admiration of external nature, of the moonlit and the starlit sky, the rising sun rushing like a bridegroom out of his canopy of clouds, the terrors of the storm and thunder, ripening into the religious pastoral imagery of the 23rd Psalm which has sunk deep into the heart of Christendom and has comforted countless death-beds. Then, secondly, we see him in the fight with the giant Philistine, bearing carelessly his staff, scrip, sling; his face, as in a famous painting, frank, fearless, innocent, yet with the frown of a duellist facing the foe intent to slay him. Then, thirdly, we behold him as courtier; harping to his terrible master; wise and valiant captain of the host; husband of admiring Michal; loving Saul and loved by him through all his half insanity. Then, again, as wanderer; guest with the Kings of Moab and of Gath, chased by Saul's soldiers, like a partridge on the mountains, sparing in the cave his helpless sleeping foe.

Then fifthly, as King upon the throne, bringing back the ark to the everlasting gates of Jebus, conqueror of Amnon, Midian, Amalek. Then a sinner, in the depths of adultery, treachery, murder; his sin like a fierce live avenger tracking his later steps, through the deaths of Amnon, Tamar, Absalom, through his perilous discrowned exile. Lastly, comes the close—raising himself from what seemed the sleep of death to seize his harp and sing his last sweet song, bequeathing his kingdom peacefully, dying in a good old age full of days and riches and honour.

Note, again, how endless and how skilful is the play of minor artifice in the story. Observe the incessant contrasts; of little David with his tall soldier brothers, of the quick-witted lad with the stupid heavy Philistine, of the sweet-natured musician with the God-forsaken Saul, of David's double faced cunning with guileless Ahimelech and unsuspecting Achish, his refinement with loutish Nabal, his passionate impulse with self-contained crafty Joab. See, too, how, anticipating modern feeling, natural scenery decorates the story; not the forest life of Robin Hood, not the haunts of the banished Duke of Arden, are more genial in pastoral fragrance than the changing holiday adventures in the Carmel

pastures. He is a model of oriental love with its mixture of sensuousness and idealism—love for hapless ill-fated Michal; for Abigail, adroit, bewitching, coquettish, tender, wise; of Bathsheba, rooted deep in sin, yet brilliant in flower and fruit. His attachment to noble-hearted Jonathan is the one instance in the Bible of devoted friendship between man and man. Nor lacks the tale its background of stately pageantry, as in the bringing back the ark from Kirjath-jearim, army, priests, people, marching in long procession, David himself leading in the wild dance so alien from our ideas; the ascent up the steep of Zion, the call on the high city gates to lift up their heads and open, since the Ichabod of a hundred years before was recovered, and the banished King of Glory had come back.

And what shall we say of David's character in its unexampled many-sidedness, not one man but a thousand, "not one but all mankind's epitome." If Christ be a type of what humanity ought to be, David is a type of what it can be. There is sagacity in the devices and resources of his wanderings, generosity towards Saul and Nabal, paternal tenderness towards Amnon, Absalom, Bathsheba's dying child, savagery in the torture of his captive prisoners with the iron

saws and burning limekilns, lies to Ahimelech, double-dyed treachery to Achish; lastly, his passionate religiousness, ever breaking through with strange unaccordant note, his institution of the temple worship supplanting bloody sacrifices by prayer and hymn and praise; above all his Psalms, those links between old and new, Jew and Christian, Catholic and Protestant, that divine mould into which have been poured all the sorrows and hopes, the penitence and the aspirations of all mankind. Take all this together and see if it is not the most wonderful story in the most wonderful of story books; and yet no mere story book, but bearing the test we have laid down; for if it begins by fascinating the intelligence, it ends by moulding the heart.

Let us end as we began, converging its interest in the text. If a great king, if a great saint, yet none the less a great sinner. Other of his strange deeds we palliate and excuse by place, time, circumstance—not so the impeachment of the parable: it stands out criminal and black and heinous. Yes; but not irremissible and deadly; for no sin need be deadly. Peter in the New Testament, David in the Old, preached with one accord that merciful creed. Ahithophel despaired and hanged himself, so did Judas.

David and Peter both looked *through* their cloud of sin to God ; they repented and the cloud rolled away. If any one at any time bears festering in his memory some foul past sin, so that an ancient scar is re-opened as he reads this tale, let him read it right and perchance the scar will heal. In nature is no waste. Out of death comes life, out of corruption beauty, out of the dunghill the waving corn and fruiting vine, from the rag-heap the fair white page of the eloquent written book. Then if no waste in *Nature*, surely not in *Grace*. Must not the divine alchemy of the Master re-shape the falls, failures, crimes, of spiritual men into a future and a nobler life ? Better a thousand times no doubt the robe unstained, the virtue unalloyed, the purity unforfeited ; yet when that Paradise be lost, there is another Paradise to be regained. Penitence may beget victory—experience of sin may arm for triumph over sin ;—as the denier Peter found recovery by feeding the sheep of Christ, as the King, sinful and denounced, of Nathan's parable, became once again a man after God's own heart.

ELIJAH'S COWARDICE

Go—return.

A STRONG man in adversity, says an ancient proverb, is a sight admired by gods and men. That is true when the man continues strong; buffeted it may be and overborne in action, yet still self-contained and firm in will and purpose. The strong man *yielding* to adversity, losing heart and nerve, living a coward in his own esteem, is pitiable in proportion to the respect he previously inspired. Into this state of weakness and discredit the great, the typical Prophet of the Old Testament admits himself to have fallen: I say "admits himself," since the story of his surrender, flight, despair, witnessed by no human eye, must have fallen from his own lips, to be recorded by his faithful friend and follower Elisha. In his conflict with the Baal priests on Carmel we had him at his best; the three years' drought had brought proud Ahab on his knees; he endured the summons of all Israel to the hill-top; witnessed the contest of life and

death for Baal or Jehovah, on one side the four hundred and fifty priests with their splendid vestments and their vociferous incantations, against them the single Prophet of the Lord in his sheepskin cloak; listened to Elijah's biting wit as Baal answered not; saw the celestial fire descend and consume the sacrifice, altar, water, trench; forbore while the four hundred and fifty were led to slaughter down the mountain side, and rode back to Jezreel through the pouring rain to tell Jezebel what had chanced.

We can guess how she received the news. The relationship of a pair thus yoked unequally has formed more than once the theme of splendid fiction: of the husband, fair in disposition and feeble in resolve, mated with a wife of reckless wickedness and tremendous will. Ahab was cowed, the people were converted, the Baal prophets slain;—Jezebel remained undismayed, unconquered, vengeful. From his sleep under the Jezreel gate-way her messenger roused Elijah; "So may Elohim do to me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them to-morrow about this time." At once he yields; forfeits faith and valiancy; the Prophet, who had just confronted Ahab and all Israel, trembles before the menace of the implacable

undaunted Queen. He flies in panic terror; southward beyond the land of Israel, beyond the utmost Judah border, till in the Beersheba groves he lies down beneath a flowering desert broom to utter his despair. "Three days ago I was triumphant; my prayer had conquered Baal and prevailed with God; I was better than my fathers; had done what none had dared before; all saw God in me. Now Jezebel has conquered God; His Prophet is a deserter and a runagate; I am *no* better, nay worse and feebler, than those who went before me. Let me die:—O Lord, take away my life!"

All high strung natures know to their cost sometimes this sudden violent change; the very temperament which arms them for great deeds begets depressed reaction. Unnatural excitement breaks down and exhausts the vital force, and the body acts upon the mind; the spirits sink, difficulties are magnified, fear and doubt rush in. "Am I the man to do this thing? have I not misconceived my strength? victorious for once, can I sustain the fight? how shall I succeed where all have failed? how stand alone against a world of wickedness and folly?" It is the weakness of an emotional nature; capable of a single splendid superhuman effort,

not of courage persevering, calm, continuous, undismayed. It flashes meteor-like, but leaves no results. Israel reverted to its Baal worship on the morrow of Elijah's victory; that was extirpated by another hand, a cooler coarser stronger brain. Often in the page of history this moral finds its point. See how God revives the forlorn, discomfited, ailing Prophet. First by the command to eat. An angel touched him as he slept, showed a cake baken on the coals, bid him, not once but twice, arise and take of it. He had fasted since the morning of the Carmel contest; not till the body was recruited could the mental cure begin. Then far away his steps were guided into the midst of the Sinai desert: for the first time since the days of Moses a prophet broke the solitude of Horeb. A well-known poet tells us how the secluded wilderness and the lone mountain top are favoured haunts of the Eternal Voice; how amid sweeping clouds and dashing torrents far away from worldly sounds God comes close, Prayer makes its way, Thought does its part, until the sick soul is healed. There Moses was schooled for leadership, there Christ awaited His temptation, there Paul matured his conversion, there Elijah rested, repenting of his cowardice, till his old self-reliance

and courage should have returned. Before the Divine Presence came the terrors of the Desert; fitter aliment for his fierce soul than nature in her beauty and her softness; the rushing hurricane, the blasting earthquake, the lightning flash, blew far his doubts, shivered his conceit, purged and burned up the hay and stubble of his weakness. God, he knew, was not in the wind, the earthquake, the fire: not till they had passed and gone, in contrast to their noisy outbreaks came the quiet accents of their Maker, the still small voice, the whisper as of a quiet breath; the "What doest thou here?" of accusing conscience, arresting, searching, irresistible.

Three pleas the Prophet urges in defence: 1. Israel has fallen away. 2. I, only I, am left. 3. They seek my life, and it were better that I should die. Three things says the Voice in answer: 1. Go, return. 2. There are left Me seven thousand worshippers. 3. Hazael, Jehu, Elisha, await your call to their several missions on My behalf. Are you "very jealous for the Lord?" show it by renewed work; Go, return. Think you that you are left alone? Unknown to you and to each other are seven thousand steadfast and believing brethren. Would you give up your life as useless? God needs it for

His work—go, return. Threefold was the appeal, to Action, Faith, Hope. The trumpet call to action, wakening the old fierce energy which had for a moment quailed. News of the hidden seven thousand, to assuage the hopelessness of unaided solitary struggle. The Scourge of idolatrous Israel, the Avenger of Ahab's crimes, the gentle healing Prophet; awaiting Elijah's call. And it was far more than these. The fire and the earthquake came and went, in them the Lord was not: the still small Voice remained;—to find its echo in the later Prophets, to be accomplished in the accents of Christ. It glimpsed a new conception of Almighty God; it was, says one, "the Gospel of Elijah," to him, fiercest, hardest, and most merciless amongst the heralds of the Older Dispensation, was revealed the gentleness and long suffering of the New. Not in the exterminating wars of Joshua, the red right hand of David, the frantic zeal of Jehu; not in men and deeds of violence, albeit violent for Jehovah's sake; not in the lightning and the hurricane, mere messengers, servants, tokens of His Majesty, would God be brought so near to man, as in the still small voice of the Child of Bethlehem, who did not strive nor cry; as in the awful silence of the Cross, as in the unhasting course of

Nature, as in the tranquil march of Providence, in the insensible influence of Christ's good words and of our fellow men's good deeds :—echoes all of the voice before which, gentle as it was, Elijah hid his face ; signs of the mild forbearing love of Him, who in the words of a Prayer Book Collect declareth His Almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity.

And if the Christian reading the history of ages past or noting the deeds of men to-day, sees tokens of God's presence in the quiet influence of earnest lives rather than in the noisy triumphs of visible success, no less does he discern *himself*, his own progress in goodness, purity, self-renouncement, by a kindred test, while in the still small voice of Horeb he reads the undertone of Conscience. The pleas for doing wrong may sound importunate and loud as they come to us from others or are urged in defence of cowardice by ourselves, but we feel that the Lord is not in them ; the summons to do right is quiet, but we know it to be the still small Voice. In that sign we conquer. Each of us who loves his Lord and strives to help his fellow-men stands a soldier in his place like that Syrian bowman at Ramoth Gilead, with his hand upon the string to shoot. To falter is to betray his trust, to shoot

is to do God's will, unknowing what may hang upon his aim, random and hesitating though it be. A Hand we cannot see rests on each shaft we loose; an Eye other than our own guides it on its fateful way. It may be, like that arrow winged by Elisha's dying hands, an arrow of the Lord's deliverance to others; it must be an arrow of reward and blessing to the faithful and obedient archer.

JEHU

Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord.

"THE Lord," says one of the Prophets, "has made all things for Himself, even the wicked for the day of evil": and sometimes a character flashes through history whose course helps us to understand this paradox. Some powerful human being, conscienceless, unprincipled, wicked, but resolute, and brave, and irresistible, lays society waste for his own caprice, till his contemporaries think God's hand shortened because it does not interpose. We who come later see how all his crimes combined to a beneficent end; how he blindly worked the righteous will of heaven; how the Lord made him for Himself.

Such a man was Jehu. The chapters which tell his story are, as usual in the Hebrew narrative, essentially dramatic; Jehu's character is nowhere painted, but not a word is spoken by him or an act performed which does not reveal a portion of that character: his fiery energy, his reckless falsehood, his grim humour, his un-

conscious yet absolute self-deceit, make the delineation as complete as it is instructive. We hear his name in earlier words; "Jehu the son of Nimshi," said God to Elijah in Horeb, "shalt thou anoint to be King over Israel." For twenty years the message slumbered; Elijah was dead, Elisha an old man, too old perhaps to execute it himself, for he sent a disciple to discharge it. Ahab too had long been dead, and Jehoram sat on his father's throne, swayed, as his father had been swayed, by Jezebel. Fighting with the Syrians for Ramoth Gilead, an outpost of his kingdom, which they had annexed, he was wounded, and went home to his palace in Jezreel, leaving his army behind. Hither came Elisha's messenger, singled out Jehu from his brother officers, and anointed him with the sacred oil. His choice was ratified by the army. Seated, in Eastern fashion, on a pile of their upper garments, conspicuous on the summit of the open barrack staircase, Jehu received the homage of his brother captains; and the host started for Jezreel, brushing aside disdainfully the messengers who came to stay them; until the rebel captain and the king stood face to face upon the very spot which long before Ahab had torn from Naboth, and where in the hearing of Jehu he

had been denounced by Elijah for his crime. To those who read the story, as all of us should read Bible history, with the map of the Holy Land beside them, the whole scene gains in interest and clearness. They will see how from Jezreel town on its rising ground the watchman spied the army with its furiously driving leader at its head, while it pushed up the grassy pass from Jordan between Little Hermon and Gilboa; how king Jehoram fell slain amid the trees and flowers of the palace garden, while his nephew Ahaziah fled, not "by the way of the Garden house," as our version incorrectly reads it, but "by the spring of Engannim," or the "garden," which still bubbles up in the centre of the modern village; and, overtaken in the ascent to the Manasseh mountains, died of his wounds at Megiddo; how in the open space before the Jezreel gate the body of the wicked Queen was trampled down by Jehu's horsemen, to be eaten by the prowling wild dogs, all save the head which had planned and the hands which had executed the crimes that overwhelmed her dynasty and her race.

For if in her the head of Ahab's house was crushed, the hands and feet remained. Two and forty princes of the kindred royal house of Judah, seventy of the line of Israel, must be

destroyed, before the predicted vengeance was complete. The two and forty fell at a shearing house on the Samaria road, the heads of the seventy lay in ghastly heaps at the gate of the ivory palace in Jezreel. One more stroke remained. The idolatrous house was extirpated, the instruments of its idolatry must follow; Baal's chief temple became a draught house, a receptacle that is for the filth and offal of the town, and its crowded worshippers were slain. Yet see how, as I said, all these violent and tragic incidents are made subordinate to the character of the man who executes them; the fulfilment of Elijah's curse interests us as we read less than the moral lineaments of the man who worked it. We note his ascendancy over the popular mind as shown by their enthusiastic acceptance of the prophet's nomination; his fiery energy in the mad driving which revealed his identity before his face could be discerned, and in the short sharp shotted words which were the death warrant of Jehoram, of Jezebel, of the princes, of the priests; his keen ironical satiric humour in the reply to his fellow captains—"Ye know the man and his communication"—in the feigned appeal to the elders of Samaria—"look ye out the best and chiefest of your master's

sons and set him on his father's throne and fight for your master's house ; " in the sarcastic courtesy which vested so reverently and carefully the priests of Baal ; in the mocking address to the people of Jezreel from amongst the heaps of bleeding heads—" Ye be righteous, behold I conspired against my master and slew him, but who slew all these ? " And noting all these traits, and with them the want of principle, of truth, of honour, which marked the execution of his mission, we ask, at first half doubtingly, how we are to place him ? amongst the servants of God or amongst the worshippers of self ? was his disregard of human life and his revolt against accepted morality covered by a mandate from his master to slay at any cost, or are we to see in him a human tiger, shielding under the prophetic injunction a love of bloodshedding for its own sake ? Setting aside the political aspect of the revolt, which was evidently significant, but of which nothing is disclosed, I suppose we shall be right in following the instinct which pronounces his conduct hateful. The voice of God's prophet ordered him to slay the house of Ahab ; the cynical exaggeration of the execution, the fringe of lies and cruelty which beset it, the elaborate revelling in the act of slaughter, were his own.

His zeal for the Lord was spurious ; a compound of party passion and native cruelty ; veiled with self-deceit profound and absolute under the specious title of religious enthusiasm.

The task of almost every man's life is two-fold ; he has to administer and regulate things without, dependent on him for arrangement and control ; and he has to administer and regulate himself, the little world within of complex motives and riotous desires and deep-rooted habits and rebellious tempers. To the man who has learned the last, the first is easy ; but the supreme misfortunes of our kind arise through those who, called on to rule the world without, find the world within ungovernable. Men need the utter failure which awaits energy unbraced by self-restraint, to show themselves and others that before we can do *good* we must first accustom ourselves to do *right*. Side by side with Jehu in his chariot sate a plain quiet man, descended from the Midianite family of Moses, only half an Israelite, unrecognised, undistinguished, the friend of Jehu in his earlier days and so honoured by him now. Who could compare this unobtrusive ascetic Kenite with the victorious brilliant being commissioned to smite and slay, to uproot a religion and a dynasty ? But turn

to the 35th chapter of Jeremiah, and see, after the lapse of three hundred years, which of the two had left the deeper mark upon his fellows. The line of Jehu by that time had been long extinct, and his kingdom had vanished from the earth; while amid the self-indulgence and idolatry of the house of Judah, one family, the descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab, remained faithful to the tradition of worship, of righteousness, of temperance, which their ancestors had bequeathed to them, winning thereby from the prophet an emphatic blessing of the Almighty.

"By their fruits ye shall know them" is the unfailing test of national as of private character. By its light we see how the pure and generous motive, the disregard of self, the longing to help and better others, with which many a man sets out in life, must be harmonised and kept in place by personal goodness, by habitual observance of purity, duty, godliness;—how without these the image whose upper part is purest gold totters upon feet of miry clay; how zeal becomes cruelty, patriotism sinks to party rancour, philanthropy to self-aggrandisement;—as Jehu's "zeal for the Lord," which deceived the contemporary historian, is threatened and con-

demned and doomed by the keener insight of the later Prophet.

Thou to wax fierce in the cause of the Lord,
To threat and to pierce with the heavenly sword ?
Anger, and zeal, and the joy of the brave,
Who bade thee to feel—Sin's slave ?

The Altar's pure flame consumes as it soars,
Faith meetly may blame, for it serves and adores ;
Thou warnest and smitest ; yet Christ must atone
For a soul that thou slightest—thine own !

JONADAB, THE SON OF RECHAB

Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever.

I LOVE the son of Rechab, not because he drank no wine—that is a matter of temperament, and health, and bringing up, which each man settles for himself—but as progenitor of the modern Quietists, of those who, sometimes wandering, always self-possessed and contemplative, have rebelled against and gone away from the fierce and feverish hurry, the venality and turbulence of what men call civilisation.

High on the ridge of the Cumnor Hills near Oxford, overlooking the sweet city with its dreaming spires, stands a vast and ancient tree, still called the Glanvil elm. Under it two hundred years ago was wont to sit a man known as the Scholar Gipsy—a man of birth, breeding, University culture, who had broken the ties of college and of worldly life, and gone out, a homeless vagrant, to associate sometimes with gipsies, whose confidence he had gained, whose

language and secrets he was supposed to know, oftener to commune with sun and clouds, with trees and flowers, with the self which nature fed, and which human ways revolted. Like one of the old prophets he came and went, emitting words which sank into the ears that heard them, now on an ingle bench where labourers drank their ale, now in the ferry boat by which mowers crossed the Thames to work, again beside the maypole where in those days lads and lasses came to dance, amongst summer bathers in the lasher pools, threshers in the barns, cress gatherers in the shallow brooks. Strange beliefs clustered round him as of an influence, wisdom, goodness, more than mortal; strange traditions rose out of his grave where he was laid to rest by his own desire under the tree which he had loved in life; in old days miracles would have been worked beside his tomb, amongst the unimaginative Berkshire rustics he was remembered only as the Scholar Gipsy. He was, for his time, a Jonadab.

If, in days when the industrial rush had not begun, Glanvil found intolerable the "sordor" as Byron calls it, of civilisation, much more may the same be felt to-day. And as a matter of fact, common talk and fugitive literature both reflect

men's weariness of modern life, of its sick hurry, divided aims, overtaxed heads and palsied hearts. Men seem to have lost the secret of living; of individuality, feeling, genius, choice; they move as parts of a machine; consent, not will, the motive power; slave drivers of themselves, their play is desperate and unbalanced like their work; they squander on social struggles and on social follies the faculties and energies which should minister to personal happiness and training. There was a time when plain living and high thinking was the motto of cultured men, their life raised to its highest point by communion with themselves, with nature, and with books. Living artificially to-day they have no time to think—no time to read aught but ephemeral trivialities watered down to suit and highly spiced to stimulate their weak digestions; aspirations and capacities alike absorbed in the struggle for power, for renown, for wealth.

Some have fled betimes out of a world which had nothing better than this to offer; flung off all claims not backed by conscience and by wisdom, gone to live with nature and to learn of her. They found for the most part what they sought—lessons from the vernal woods and murmuring streams and moorland solitudes, which led them

somehow into the presence chamber of Him who made these things for His pleasure and found them very good. We all have heard of the London tradesman two centuries ago, who working in his shop for sufficiency not for superfluity, was able to sweeten toil with leisure, wandered with his angle rod through the pleasant meadows, gaining kinship with animals and flowers, winning a contented heart and a picturesquely active brain. We have all heard too of the Oxford clergyman, not more than a century ago, who passed from College life, society excitement, prizes, to a quiet Hampshire village; gave himself to the thankful restful survey of pastoral sights and sounds; noted the life history of trees, birds, insects; taught us to learn and understand the soul satisfying beauty which resides in common things. Both these were scholars, and were all the better for their scholarship, but they gained something too which scholarship could not give, wrote down for us the lessons they had learned, the honey hived by heart and mind. The books they have left behind are amongst the most fascinating in our language. When brains are wearied and hearts are sore, when life seems futile and time idly squandered, to how many men have new avenues to happiness been opened,

reassuring medicine for dejection found, in reading Walton's *Angler* and White's *Selborne*.

Of this quiet brotherhood was Jonadab; Kenite, Chieftain, Warrior, Anchorite. Son to Rechab the "Rider," trusted intimate of fierce and furious Jehu; he had played his part we see as a young man among the wild soldier crew which surrounded Ahab and his sons. Weary of courts and camps, sickened, it may be, by the spectacle of his friend's "zeal for the Lord," he flung from him the state and power of a royal favourite, found rest and happiness in the seclusion of a tented pastoral life, enjoined his descendants to keep up the temperate asceticism, the long uncut hair, the simple costume and the rustic habits which marked the Nazarite sect. How well they obeyed him we read in a later curious chapter, an oasis in the desert of Jeremiah's dismal experiences and lurid prophecies. Three hundred years had passed—Jehu's line had been long extinct, his fame forgotten, his kingdom vanished from the earth; but amid the rebellions and idolatries of the house of Judah the faithful Rechabites survived, and live for ever in the Prophet's page.

The moral of the tale is obvious—we may point it for ourselves. Not to go out of the

world, but to lead within it our own original, self-governed, healthy lives. If men around us act on maxims shallow, artificial, borrowed, we may live by principles independent, high-seated, and eternal. If the aims of others are conventional, adopted not because they compel approval in themselves, but because they are what other men approve, ours may be high, noble, self-justified; eccentric to the popular vision, but courting and abiding by the test at once of religion and of reason. So long as any man remains with courage, foresight, faith, to scheme and shape his life on lines like these, so long will the prophet's benediction hold with a scope beyond his meaning—"Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever."

A GREAT LADY

I dwell amongst mine own people.

The key to Elijah's character we find on Carmel; he stood there, awful, solitary, superhuman, merciless and desolating in Jehovah's name. For Elisha's let us turn to Shunem; we shall see him reverent, august, mighty, yet beneficent, affectionate, loving, social; servant of a gentler God than his great forerunner, he comes to us like Christ after John the Baptist; like piping after mourning. But Shunem not only brings out Elisha's nature, it yields a delightful peep into Israelitish daily life; turns from kings and captains, wars and troubles, idolatries and punishments, to depict a *home*. How full and perfect is the narrative! the affluent hospitable household, master and men, servants and mistress, the reapers in the cornfield, the mother in her nursery, the child at play, told with an intense energy of sympathy which gives to the whole scene a charm as of tender domestic life in modern times. The home might be an English

home; the nursery an English nursery; the Shunemite an English lady; the prophet, in his relation to her, an intimate and valued English pastor. I wish some gifted pen—a woman's pen it needs must be—would write for us on the women of the Bible, would amplify out of her own insight those half-drawn characters from the sacred page;—tender Rachel, faithful Ruth, brave Deborah, terrible Jael, heroic Jephthah's daughter, crafty Judith, weeping Hannah, shrewd-tongued Abigail, hapless twice-forsaken Michal. We love the New Testament women too—the Bethlehem sisters, penitent Mary Magdalene, rich Lydia, charitable Dorcas, unknown Euodias, and Syntyche, who helped to bear the burdens of St. Paul. But above them all we love the Shunemite; she comes nearer to our daily experience, closer to our heart of hearts. She was a great lady—great in estate, importance, rank; rich in slaves, labourers, mules; queen over her husband's stately home in the rich Esdraelon valley. Hard by, somewhere on the Moreh hillside, dwelt Elisha. Now and then he visited her. She knew him for a man of God, welcomed him with a reverential and devout regard which women, oftener than men, yield to honoured

and accepted religious teachers. Woman-like, her thoughts were busy with his personal needs; she felt consideration for him on his visits, weary and encumbered, not liking to be beholden and constrained by the ceremonial of a grand house; herself reserved and shy, she would minister to the same qualities in him; she would build a little chamber on the wall, furnished for his simple needs, accessible from without, that he might go to and fro at will unannounced. "He that receiveth a Prophet," said Christ long afterwards, "shall receive a Prophet's reward," the reward which a Prophet can give; and Elisha, humble in himself, had power and influence with great ones. So he sends for his kind hostess and asks how he shall repay her. "Wouldst thou be spoken for to the King? or to the captain of the host?"—A place at court for herself, rank in the army for her husband? Her answer lights up her whole character. "I dwell among mine own people." "Who is my neighbour?" she seems to say in the spirit, not of the scribe who asked, but of Christ who answered, the question Who is the true neighbour? Not the selfish man immersed in profit, business, pleasure, who puts away from him the wretchedness around; not the

man who knows, admits, regrets it, will give money to abate it, but shrinks from the personal toil, odium, sacrifice, of removing it. Hers was the true neighbourliness which only personal sympathy and presence give, hers the spirit of the Samaritan who showed compassion on the wounded man by going to him and helping him. She would not have the splendours of a palace in Samaria, nor stoop to the jealousies, heart-burnings, unrealities, meannesses, of court, of fashionable, of military life; she would know and succour the poor and helpless of her country-side, the servants of her home, her husband's labourers, tenants, slaves; would appease their differences, supply their wants, be to them, like Deborah, "a mother in Israel." "I dwell among mine own people!" Methinks I see her passing to and fro a ministering angel, not less reverenced because so dearly loved, saying to herself, as might any great English lady say, "Why have I a spacious residence, means assured, fair surroundings, while my poor sister, child of our common Father, partner of our common faith, heiress of our common hope, is overburdened with her narrow home, bowed by anxious care for her children's daily bread? My happiness shall not be bounded by my own

park wall ; it shall flow forth in wise and generous help, in tender loving sympathy ; ' mine own ' are these, whom God has given me, for whose sake I am stewardess of the goods I call my own. Amongst them will I dwell ; not in freezing grandeur, not in solitary isolation, but in daily interchange with them of loving sisterhood. For, indeed, over the park wall no less than within the cottage, the leavening hand of sorrow finds its way." One sad shadow rested on the Great Lady's life ; with husband ill-mated and old, no child had come to sweeten her loveless home, and so this was the reward the Prophet gave. " Within the year thou shalt embrace a son." It came as he had promised. The empty rooms were made alive, a little presence filled the mother's heart and time, filled them for a happy year or two ; then, just when the child learnt to know and answer the maternal smile, to fill with prattle the erst silent home, came a careless exposure to the morning Syrian sun, " and he sat on her knee till even, and he died." She laid him on Elisha's bed ; sought the Prophet in his not far distant home ; knelt at his feet like that Syro-Phœnician woman later on at the feet of Christ, though, like her, thrust away ; urged

her pathetic sorrowful reproach—"Did I desire a son of my lord? Happier not to have had than, having, to have lost." He sends his staff to be laid upon the child, it wakes him not; "there is neither voice nor hearing," only the staff to show that the Prophet is on his way. Soon he shall stretch himself upon the child, the warmth shall return to the icy limbs, colour to the waxen cheek, the deadly trance will be dispelled, he will say, "Take up thy child." Quietly she receives her happiness; silent, calm, dignified, self-contained, in joy as in sorrow, "she bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son and went out."

We are all touched in reading it; tears rise into our heart if not into our eyes; for the lot of the Shunemite is universal. In every home, from every family, sounds, sooner or later, the funeral hymn, when the angel of death with folded wings summons some inmate forth—the father perhaps on whom all depends, the mother whose place none can ever fill, the young not entered on life's trials, the infant not conceiving them. There was no comfort then for Rachel or for the Shunemite; for them the grave was the gate of death, not the avenue of a beyond. But the Christian mother knows how even from

a bereaved heart spring graces of hope, and faith, and resignation, which flourish not amid happiness and joy. She holds it better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. And to her streams comfort from the Gospel page. Hard by Shunem, on the same hillside, was the little village, Nain, where a Greater than Elisha worked a speedier, readier, and more finished miracle. From Shunem to Nain, from Elisha to Christ, leaps the heart of the bereaved to-day. Clouds may rise on Moreh and hide our Elisha from our gaze. The cold earth we lay upon our lost ones, like Elisha's staff, wakes them not, yet speaks of One upon the road. He who in type stretched himself at Shunem on the dead, who in antitype touched the bier at Nain, and bade the young man arise, bids us remember that they are not dead but sleeping, waiting till our work is done and our reward is earned, to welcome us where they are gone before into a home which knows no severance, and from which all tears are for ever wiped away.

NAAMAN

Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

A ROUGH log-hut, built in a forest solitude, by unskilful hands, from the trees which grew around; within it a humble looking man in peasant's dress; at the door a splendid crowd; richly mounted soldiers and gaily dressed attendants surrounding a stately chariot:—what could have brought so grand a company to so mean a place? What went they out into the wilderness for to see?

We have the reason of their coming: inside that chariot sate a famous man: general of the armies of Syria, a conqueror in many battlefields, the saviour of his country from her enemies, the greatest captain of his age, beloved of his master, rich, honourable, admired; but—a leper. In his youth he had been beautiful and petted, for in the Syrian language Naaman means "The Darling"; but the terrible curse of those hot countries in that early time

had found its way into the palace which a hundred servants guarded, and beneath the panoply which sword or spear had never pierced; this darling of his Damascus home, this mighty man in valour against his foes abroad had become a loathsome object; his lovers and friends put away from him, while they that did see him without conveyed themselves from him.

Startling as is the contrast between Naaman's grandeur and his misery, between the gorgeous general's uniform and the corpse-like form it covered, it was but an extreme case of that which we see going on around everywhere. The law of our outward life is Compensation; God does not give His gifts altogether unequally to men; the older we grow and the deeper we learn to look below the surface the more clearly we see that joy and grief go together into most men's lives; that outward prosperity is often darkened by secret misery; that apparent lowliness and privation are often lightened by freedom from and ignorance of the cares that embitter higher state. Naaman would have given all his greatness, all his glory in the field of battle, all his Master's love and honour, for the clear skin and healthy flowing blood and painless daily life of the meanest soldier of his

guard; many a man to-day, whom we are tempted to admire for his wealth or his position or his reputation or his intellect, would gladly lay them down, if with them he could throw aside the secret sorrow or infirmity which underlies and poisons them. Mighty Naaman in his palace, lowly Elisha in his cottage! let him who envies those above him, and thinks his own estate unhappy by comparison, ask himself now and then whether of these two he would prefer to be. True human happiness springs not from without but from within, not from eminence and birth and wealth, but from temper and principle and habit; from the genial love of others which puts self out of sight; from the filial love of God which keeps the heart and conscience pure and undefiled.

I know not whether, with all his outward wretchedness, Naaman had this inward source of peace; but there was one in his palace who possessed it. The Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. No outward lot could well be more unfortunate than hers. Many of us know what it is to leave our homes. We have felt the heart-sinking such as no other

sorrow brings, when the wrench of parting with all the tender surroundings and all the mute associations of our childhood is followed by the feeling that we are amongst strangers and must stand alone; but she had far more to bear than this. Torn from slaughtered relatives and a ruined home; placed amongst people of a strange face and language, who looked upon her countrymen with contempt; not a servant, but a slave, a victim to tyranny and blows and cruelty; she yet kept alive in her heart the knowledge of the God of Israel, and the memory of His wonder-working Prophets; she knew that in her captivity and loneliness He had healed her sorrow; she believed that He could heal the disease and misery of her master—"Would God my lord were with the Prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

And so came to pass that which we read just now. Naaman's splendid chariot, with its long train of guards and servants, rolled away from beautiful Damascus, past the Lebanon defiles, and fording the Lebanon torrents to the king of Israel at Jezreel; across the valley of Esdraelon to the Jordan bank, where on the forest slope which rose beyond the stream, amid the small

colony of holy hermits, who ministered to his wants and listened to his teaching, dwelt the man of God. "Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha."

Not quite in the frame of mind which wins the favour of the Almighty and gains an answer to prayer: recognising the skill, or the magic art, or perhaps the miraculous power of the prophet, condescending therefore to the long journey, to the attitude of a petitioner, to the acknowledgment of obligation; but still the great Syrian lord in the presence of the mean Israelite peasant, expecting that his pomp and his gold would win him deference and homage, that he should be healed with full display of divination, with solemn word and act and touch, with art formal and conspicuous in proportion to his own greatness and importance. "Behold, I thought that he would come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." Very different and unexpected was his reception. The prophet would not even see him, but sent him out a simple message—"Go—wash in Jordan seven times." Then his rage burst forth. This was the reward of his

toil and his humiliation;—his sickly suffering shattered frame had been dragged through roadless wastes in hope of cure; his haughty spirit had abased itself to ask a favour of the conquered king of Israel and to come a suppliant to this mean place;—and now, his sufferings unpitied, his pomp unnoticed, his gold despised, he is turned away like a beggar from the door, with the added insult of a foolish trivial message. He gazed on the yellow mud-stained stream which rolled beneath his feet at the bottom of its deep ravine; he thought of silver Abana and Pharpar, winding through the myrtle and apricot groves of his native home to their far-off inland sea; and, sick with disappointment and anger, he turned to begin his weary hopeless journey back.

In truth this shock of rage and indignation was the beginning of his cure. His mind was leprous like his body, crusted over with pride and arrogance, diseased with haughty self-consciousness and contempt for others. It needed the rude plainness of the Prophet to tear away this covering of self, to teach him, as years of suffering had not taught him, his own true littleness. Flattered and caressed and feared and waited on, he had seemed to himself

more than man; now for the first time he met a fellowman who had looked him through and through; had cast aside as trifling and of no account his splendour and his fame; had laid bare his inmost self and tested it to see if it were true or false. Thou askest humbly to be healed —be healed; but first *show* thy humbleness. Toss off the purple robes that speak to thee of thy worldly greatness; strip off with them the wrappings of selfish pride which that greatness has woven about thy heart; dip thy poor naked leprous body in yonder turbid flood; submit thy sin-defiled soul to the stream of heavenly grace which flows from my lowly hand. Nor think that one act of abasement will suffice to wash away the stain of years. Repeated trials of submissive faith await thee; seven times thou must plunge beneath the flood; six times shall the cure be delayed to test the patience of thy belief, and the sincerity of thy submission; then when these are proved, the seventh time thy flesh shall come again, clear and unstained and fresh, as the body of a little child.

As we read how the lesson was learnt; how the wise counsel of the attendants helped the new-born self-knowledge of their lord; how with purified body and changed heart the happy

humbled Naaman went home we may well hold up before ourselves the mirror of his sickness and his cure, and see if they are not reflected in the experience of our own daily lives. The point of his story, observe, was this: God tested his fitness for the boon he sought by setting him to do a *little thing*. He did it, and was healed.

And are not our own histories made up of little things? are not little acts the probation of our lives, the foundation of our habits, the test of our growth, the source of our influence, the training of our characters? Often men rebel as Naaman did; long for great careers, stirring temptations, conspicuous dangers and actions and successes; anything rather than a range of petty duties, petty obediences, slight trials, trivial monotonous routine. And they rebel for the same reason: because the little things are really harder than the great ones; because a round of common tasks done for the sake of God and duty, with no one to observe and praise and publish them, is many times more difficult than a great notorious public act, watched and applauded and rewarded. And after all are these things little? is the thoughtless gossip little, which injures reputations and

severs friends, breeds strife and hatred and estrangement? is the foul word little, which sinks into an innocent mind, stains its purity, and sows the seeds of future sin? is the unkind hasty utterance little, which makes a home quarrelsome and comfortless and ignoble? Is the word in season little, which spoken perhaps by humble lips and amid meanest work, yet finds a home in the heart of one who hears, and brings forth a hundred-fold? Is the kindly manner little, which holds up to view life's brightest side, and cheers with its hearty warmth all those on whom it shines? Is the day little and of no avail which has been spent in small acts of self-renouncement, sweetening the moral atmosphere around and making all who witness it unselfish too?

Let us learn the lesson learnt by Naaman in that supreme moment of his surrender and reward, that nothing is little in the sight of God, nothing small and poor which He commands. Let the thought lighten small home vocations, ennoble small home duties, dictate small acts of kindness, check small selfish deeds and words. We, too, like Naaman, are lepers; our sins and shortcomings, our evil tempers and our clinging habits spot and crust and stain the purity

which God stamped upon our souls. In this House of God as each week comes round we stand at Elisha's door, asking to be cleansed. He bids us wash in Jordan. He tells us that home duties, home kindnesses, home self-forgetfulness and thought of others are the simple means which God prescribes to bring us near to Him. Go wash in Jordan seven times! Let each day of each week leave, as it passes by, its memory of tempers overcome, temptations met, work done because God wills it, kindness shown for the love of Christ. Then back to Elisha's door again; to feel the peace that is born of duty and obedience; to gain strength for fresh visits to the Jordan wave; until the day shall come when it is given us to cross the stream, and to stand in the presence of Elisha's God, pure as a little child.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

Can these bones live?

ISAIAH is the loftiest, Jeremiah the mournfullest, Ezekiel the wildest, of the greater Prophets. It was Ezekiel's wont to prophesy, not only by sayings, but by acts—acts novel, uncouth, startling. He ate filthy food in the sight of all the people; he dug a hole in the wall of his house and brought out all his furniture; he boiled a mess of meat in a brass pot until the flesh was consumed, the water boiled away, the vessel burnt and cracked; he sate motionless on the ground for seven days, as Indian Fakirs sit to-day; he cut off his priestly hair and beard, weighed it in scales and flung it into the fire; he went gaily dressed and without signs of mourning when his wife died; and as at each new strange performance the people gathered round and questioned him, he translated into entreaty, warning, prophecy, the fantastic acts which had arrested them. He

and those around him were fellow exiles in Babylon, far away from their beloved Jerusalem, which was besieged now, for the second time, by Nebuchadnezzar. At last came to them the news—"The city is smitten"—its temple burnt with fire, its walls and buildings levelled with the ground, its nobles slain with the sword, its king a blinded captive. Hitherto the prophecies had all been threatening; but the worst that could be was over, and they breathe henceforth hope and comfort; the two broken sticks unite in Ezekiel's hand, he sees the temple newly built in a vision, the waters of Siloam flow down to freshen and restore the stagnation of the dead Salt Sea; the old happiness and glory of the Lord's people is recovered, national obedience and purity are restored. Revival takes the place of ruin—"the dry bones live."

This last is the image with which we have here to do. The Prophet takes his hearers into the midst of the Mesopotamian desert, and shows them a familiar sight. A caravan of travellers, or perhaps an army of soldiers, had been overwhelmed and slain by the flying column of a sandstorm. By and by a fresh hurricane blew the entombing sand away, and left the

corpses of camels, horses, men, to be devoured by the fowls of the air and prowling beasts, to become a charnel house of broken scattered bones. A ghastly, to us a scarce imaginable sight; one great weird painter of our own time perhaps alone could have depicted it. The prophetic impulse comes upon Ezekiel. Suddenly, as he prophesies, the dead waste heap becomes instinct with swarming life and motion; the horrors crawl rattling over one another, bone seeking bone, searching for and selecting each his old associate and mate, of backbone, limb, and skull, until the strange articulation is complete, and the mingled bone-heaps lie sorted into rows of reconstructed skeletons. Another burst of prophecy—there comes a low sound as of distant thunder, sullen mutter of the rising wind. Nearer and nearer it rushes on, and as it blows upon the bones their vanished flesh returns, hair covers the naked skulls, fulness of cheek and lip envelops the grinning jaws, muscles clothe the bony limbs and trunks; they lie no longer skeletons but pale naked corpses, as the passing sandstorm left them when it ceased. Yet once again sounds the prophetic call; again the four winds of heaven blow, winds not now of death but of life, winged

not with desert terrors but with the creating Word of God; and the dead men rise, clothed and living, on their feet, peering in each other's faces for the dreamlike memory of the past, the confounding miracle of the present.

Be sure the prophecy went home to those weeping exiles. Dry bones were they in the desert of the strange Chaldean land. Over them winds and storms had gone, had left them dislocated, scattered, dead. Yet to them a framework and foundation had been left. God, who stripped them of their glory, might restore it; that the dry bones should live was the authoritative burden of the Prophet's pledge in this Vision of the Valley of the Bones.

The message of inspired prophecy is like thunder in a mountain land; it echoes on from peak to peak with changed and varying reverberations: first the hurricane of penal storm that prostrates, slays, and strips; anon, the breath of inspiring life to revive and regenerate and restore. Turn the page of history. We read of a nation great and prosperous, but corrupt and false; its early nobleness sapped by warlike greed or treacherous mammon canker. A day comes when itself is crushed by the pitiless wars it has invoked; the streams of gold which filled

its veins pass off in other channels, it falls from its place in the world, becomes forgotten and effaced. Then in its extremity prophets come to stir it, a wind breathes upon the dry bones and they awake, its life history flows again in other purer streams. No longer arbiter of the world's markets, impregnable and aggressive and victorious in the world's fighting lists, it returns into the historic page with a new life; quiet, humble, self-contained, peace and happiness the portion of its people, at the price of whose misery and suffering its former greatness was maintained. Or we read of a Church powerful and splendid, yet fallen from primitive purity and Christlike simpleness to idolatry, Pharisaism, godlessness; its clergy ignorant and selfish, its hungry sheep not fed. Through national catastrophe, through popular revolt, through internal spiritual disruption, it falls from its high estate, as the French Church fell a hundred years, the English Church four hundred years ago. Great prophets came and spoke to the dry bones; God's word breathed over them, at once to shatter and to renew; Gospel foundations were once more laid by men, whose names flourish still amongst us as a cementing memory, whose utterances still comprise the

charter of a Church Reformed. We see it in the individual. A man shall become reprobate and spiritually dead; put away from him successfully all higher thoughts; recede from life to death, to the corruption of a fleshless skeleton. But a Voice comes on him to arouse, constrain, convert; God's breath plays upon his soul; the dead bones are clothed with restored capacity, the quickened nature stands upright in spiritual vigour, the wicked man turns from the wickedness he has committed, and saves his soul alive.

Observe the double action of the selfsame Spirit. It was the wind which brought the wrecking sandstorm, the wind which restored the dry bones to flesh and life. God's spirit comes in wrath to overwhelm, in mercy and in love to renovate. It is for men to take their choice between the Annihilator and the Comforter, the fiery whirlwind and the still small voice. Observe again: to restoration two things are needful, the Prophet and the Wind. Prophecy falls flat if the Spirit does not animate it, animate the preacher to cast the seed, animate the seed to grow. The Spirit will not come without the Prophet. The Word must be made Flesh; the Divine Intelligence, remote and mute

behind the cloud, finds ever voice in human lips, in dwelling amongst men.

The Vision affects us all; for the professional prophet is no more; not now, as in Ezekiel's day, the hair cloth garment and the expounding seer hold monopoly of the Word of Life. Often from a man's near and dear ones, companion, brother, friend, comes the unintended seasonable prophecy which breathes conviction and begets spiritual change. If we are all potential prophets, let us see to it that our utterances be inspiring, thoughtful, guarded. By thy word shalt thou be justified, accepted, crowned; by the kindly word which melts, the rousing word which wakens, the dexterous word which informs, the timely word which turns the scale of friend's or neighbour's soul when balancing between good and evil.

There are dry bones everywhere. Wasted lives, reckless selfservice, open sins, must needs bestrew and track the onward march of life's great army through the desert of the world. Happy he, who as this or that encounters him, has learned to pause upon his way and ask, not only with compassion but with energy—"CAN these bones live?" who feels and wakens the prophetic impulse, summons the recreating

winds by wise prophetic prayerful counsel, passes on his way linked hand in hand to a once dead comrade aroused and risen to his feet, to a once dry skeleton, enfleshed, inspirited, alive.

II. GOSPEL NUGGETS

His God was Christ; at once divinely excellent and humanly affectionate: his incessant anxiety that history, that literature, that government, that, above all, education, should be "Christian," was an application of this intense conception:—"Not truth, nor justice, nor benevolence, nor Christ's mother; not His holiest servants, nor His blessed Sacraments, nor His very mystical body the Church, but Himself only, who died for us and rose again, Jesus Christ both God and Man."

Life of Dr. Arnold.

PEACE TO GENTLE MEN*

Peace on earth to men of goodwill.

"FREEDOM from anxiety" was the heathen's prayer. That, says the most enchanting of Latin Poets, is the wish of all mankind; not to be bought by gold or purple, wealth or rank; depending on a man's self, not on things outside him; on a well appointed mind, schooled to moderation and contentment.

This and nothing else was the Christmas gift to humanity, as announced by the Herald Angels in the Nativity hymn. Their message was "peace on earth"; and peace in their song meant what Paul meant, what the Roman poet meant: a mind at rest, unanxious, quiet, tranquil, self-possessed. "He their fear to cease, sent down the meek-eyed Peace," says Milton, after his manner personifying the thought.

It was the appropriate Christmas message; for a type of the peace and gentleness which the

* Preached on Christmas Day.

angels hymned was the Child in its cradle close at hand. The Old Testament Christmas chapter tells of a child born in a palace; the New Testament lesson, of the child lying in a manger. Both suit the motto, for the keynote of Christmas is its childlikeness. Christianity was built, not like other empires, on a throne, but on a cradle; nay, on a cradle and therefore on a throne; "the throne," says French Béranger, "of a happy home rests upon a cradle": and as *a* child is the centre of the family, so *the* Child is the centre of Christianity. Most of us may have known fair homes in which the cradled inmate governs with gentle absolute beneficent sway. All minister to its comfort; all forget themselves and take a second place beside it: it rules by virtue of the sacred domestic relation of incarnate helplessness; by its example, at once endearing and divine, of innocence fresh from heaven. To that bond, appeal, persuasiveness, palace and cottage alike respond.

That is the human child in every home; so it was with the Divine Child of Bethlehem. Visitors to that poor stable discerned no wild miracle; yet all that was best in earth and heaven was represented round it. Maternal love was there, recognising and exhibiting its

own divinity, the sacred mother instinct in which philosophy sees to-day the source of all morality. Monarchy, oppressed with wealth and greatness, came to it laying down both in worship. Shepherds pinched with poverty beheld their own lowliness glorified in that mean stall. The morning stars, which sang together when the world was made, deputed the brightest among them all to shine out of the East and point the way to it. Beasts of the field, ox and ass, bending round the cradled Infant, claimed through Him brotherhood with man as people of His Father's pasture, and sheep of His Father's hand.

"Jesu, meek and gentle" is the hymn which we have just now sung. It carries us back to our text; to that important second part of it which our English Version misses. "Peace on earth," it ought to run, "*to men of gentle will.*" "Love towards men of love," Keble renders it in the Christian Year. For it is the "moderation" of St. Paul, the "contented mind" of Horace, the "gentle will" of St. Luke, which inherits peace.

Think how much that word "gentle" covers. It means the courtesy of manner which springs from reverence for self and others.

> Manners are not idle, but the fruit
> Of loyal nature and of noble mind,

says Guinevere in Tennyson. "Manners make the man," was the motto of the great Founder Bishop. "He was a very parfait gentil knight," sings Chaucer of him who rode first in rank and nobleness among his Canterbury pilgrims. "Courage and courtesie," says eloquent Dr. Barrow, "distinguish the gentleman from the vulgar." All this is conveyed by the "gentle will" of the angels; all this is part of the Christmas boon, of the Christmas teaching.

Then it means tender, sympathetic, loving:—as was the heart which took thought for the four thousand when weary, faint, and fasting; the heart of Him who posed as the good Samaritan, wept at Lazarus' grave, forgave His murderers on the cross. That lesson comes to us with the music of our Christmas bells; to feel for others, turn aside to help others, join in schemes for their deliverance; so far as is possible, know and tend them personally; out of our happiness cheer them, out of our competence succour them.

Again, gentle means winning, soothing. The Greeks worshipped a goddess whom they called Winningness or Gentleness. Shakespeare speaks

of the lark as gentle, in its sweet homeward more even than in its soaring heavenward notes; speaks of "gentle sleep," its resting barrier between day and day, care and care, work and work. The same thought echoes from Christ's "comfortable words," "Come unto Me ye weary, and I will give you rest"; from well-nigh all the petitions of our Litany, whose soothing tendency its special Poet has proclaimed. Gentle once more means meek; "meek-eyed Peace" we quoted just now, that quality which inherits the earth, typified in Isaiah's prophecy by the lamb which openeth not her mouth. Be forgiving, say the Christmas bells, unasserting, humble, not wont to take and keep offence. If to remember, resent, repel, return a wrong, appeals to our lower natures, our higher self approves the magnanimity, the meekness, which overlooks, forgets, ignores. Often this virtue of gentleness is the last victory men gain. In long experience of life, close knowledge of their fellows, seeing the friction born of asperity, arrogance, self-assertion, how the daily path is smoothed by leniency, consideration, meekness, they set themselves in later years to wear in mind and manner the habit of gentleness acquired and increased. Not seldom have I

known in biographies and in real life an old man, abrupt and rough in his maturity, recover in his closing years the benignant meekness of his childhood; not from worn-out faculty for temper, but from laboured strength to vanquish it; as the Wise Men lost sight, in mid-travel, of the Star which shone upon their opening path, to recover it as they climbed the last high toilsome hill.

And into all this repentance and resolve, the regret and the inspiration, the struggle and the victory, comes the image of the cradled Babe. In an Oxford College Chapel is a famous Nativity window. From the Infant, lying in the midst, light is made to stream on all around. So, through the Christmas chapter, ending with our text, light streams from the manger on the Christmas feast; tingeing alike its festivity and fun, its tender memories and associations with that childishness of which I spoke, making it the Child's Festival of all the year. Children understand it best, with a fulness of feeling and an implicitness of faith they lose in after years; but still to us older ones each Christmas freshens and recaptures something of our childish feelings —in hymn and carol, in family and neighbour greetings, in fireside merriment and kindliness,

we feel again the tender softening emotion which was our childish tribute to the day. With shepherds, angels, kings, we once more go even unto Bethlehem, content if only, after failures and shortcomings past, chances missed, friends lost, aims unperformed, we may win and make our own the Christmas prize which the angels glorified and the Infant taught, anchoring our souls at last upon the steadfast dominating Peace which waits on gentle will.

The sacred chorus first was made
  Upon the first of Christmas days.
The shepherds heard it overhead,
  The joyful angels raised it then:
Glory to heaven on high it said,
  And peace on earth to gentle men.

My song, save this, is little worth,
  I lay my simple note aside,
And wish you health and love and mirth,
  As fits the solemn Christmas tide,
As fits the holy Christmas birth;
  Be this, good friends, our carol still
Be peace on earth, be peace on earth,
  To men of gentle will.

GOLD AND FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

Gold and frankincense and myrrh.

LET us now go even unto Bethlehem and learn what these words mean. We shall find a poor village scattered thinly upon the top of a long grey hill; and we shall be told that the village has not altered much in nineteen hundred years, that it was very little larger or richer or better than it is now on the day when Christ was born in its humblest, meanest corner. There are vineyards on the hill sides here and there, and wide corn fields in the valley below, from which it gained its name BETH-LE-HEM, that is "House of Bread." One building there is very unlike the rest—a large church standing in the midst of a convent, and from a door inside the Church you descend into a vault underground, where silver lamps are always burning and men are always praying; for in a corner of this vault lies a marble slab which is believed to have been the spot where, beside a rough wooden manger,

with stabled cattle lowing all around, Mary tended her new-born Child. A crowd of strangers thronged the little village then; there was no room in its single inn for persons so poor and homely as Joseph and his wife. "No room for them in the inn!"—and yet, had the goodman of the inn but known it, there was none in all the crowd there flocking up to David's City for whom its gates should have been flung so wide, none of whom it might have been so truly said that in receiving them he entertained angels unawares. But so it is with men for ever in their false estimate of greatness:—no room in a church for men whose observances offend some narrow dogma, yet who are nearer to God's Kingdom than the Pharisees who reject them; no room in a career for pursuits and tasks conflicting with some strait-laced prepossessions, yet in themselves wholesome, enlarging, purifying; no room in a heart for the softening sentiment, the humanising sympathy, the unpractical aspiration, without which life flows indeed, but flows on a course of ice without and stone within, like the glaciers on the mountain side.

No room for them in the inn; and so they took refuge in one of the hill side caves where, as at this day, the ox and the ass were stalled. There

her Child was born, laid in the rough cradle of an empty feeding trough—poor shelter against the wintry weather on that keen hill top: in His birth, as in His life and death, a Man of Sorrows, acquainted with pain and grief. But earthly poverty and squalor could not hide His greatness; visitors came to that lowly cave whom King Herod himself welcomed as honoured guests. Three splendid strangers from far-off Eastern lands bowed themselves before Him as He lay, worshipped Him as King of the Jews, opened the treasures which their servants carried, presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. They were not only rich but learned men. In their distant Persian home they had studied from their watch-towers the heavenly bodies, and had learned according to the knowledge then believed how to interpret and explain them. Night after night six months before they had seen one brilliant star which foretold, as they supposed, the birth of some great person in the West. Their learning told them of the Hebrew prophecies, that a King should be born in the land of Israel. So to Judæa they went, to Bethlehem of David, the little village which the Jewish books predicted as the birthplace of the future Great One. Once

again, as they toiled up the steep hillside, the star which they had seen in their own land months ago, and which they had lost sight of ever since, hung over the mountain top ; guided by that they found the Child they sought, and fulfilled, as they knelt before Him, the prophecy of Isaiah uttered seven hundred years before, "That gentiles should come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising ; that kings should be His nursing fathers and queens His nursing mothers." They themselves, although they knew it not, performed an act of prophecy in the gifts they gave. They brought the natural treasures of their country—the golden wealth of Ormus and of Ind, the sweet powdered gums with which their native palaces were perfumed, the bitter juice of Acacia which formed to their countrymen a precious costly cordial. But gold is to the Western world a symbol of monarchy and royal state, frankincense rose from Jewish altars to Almighty God, and myrrh was used to embalm the Roman dead ; and so in these three gifts Christian eyes have seen a symbol of the nature and the destiny of that Infant in the Bethlehem manger. Gold—for was He not the King of Israel ? frankincense—for was He not the Son of God ? myrrh—for

King and God although He were, He should lie in the grave and His friends should bring sweet spices to anoint Him.

> Gold a monarch to declare,
> Frankincense that God is there,
> Myrrh to tell the heavier tale
> Of His death and funeral.

So said Christian saints and poets long ago, so says every Christian preacher now. Still on each Epiphany high officers of State kneel before the altar in our Sovereign's Chapel, to offer a wedge of gold, a salver of frankincense, a flask of myrrh ; just as, not many years ago—a graceful custom now, I fear, extinct—stood the Twelfth Cake upon many an English board with its ornaments of gold, its spices, and its sweetmeats, its pictured Kings and Queens, for which the children laughingly drew lots, not knowing that they commemorated in their sport that visit of the royal Magi to the stable on the Bethlehem hillside, acting over again each year those sacrificial gifts of which St. Matthew tells.

The veil of Scripture falls upon the Magi as they kneel ; early pious Christian story raises it. It tells us how years later the Apostle Thomas, preaching in that Eastern land, found

the Wise Men still alive, and baptized them in the name of Him whom they had worshipped and endowed; how they went forth, aged as they were, to teach among the heathen their gospel of the Child-God, messenger of gentleness and humility and peace; how they were slain by savage races, and miracles were worked upon their tombs; how at last a famous Frankish King dug up their bones, and brought them to his beautiful city hard by the river Rhine, where, in a chapel blazing with gems and gold, and thronged by daily worshippers, they are still supposed to lie; where now once in every year on Childermas day, the children of the city throng to commemorate before their shrine those innocents of Bethlehem whom jealous Herod slew, in the vain hope, that amidst the slaughter, He who was born King of the Jews might perish. It is fitting that children should be actors in such a drama—fit that little ones, of whom is Heaven's Kingdom, should keep alive, in guileless sport, the rising of the star which shines clearer in theirs than in older eyes and the offering of the gifts which only pure and innocent hands may dedicate. For to the infant mind, open to take in and understand the world around, all things speak of God, all things

are referred to Him. The glories of sky and earth and sea are to them the shinings of His presence; the childish wants of which their parents know not, the childish difficulties their parents cannot solve, are borne straight from their hearts to Him: God, from whom they so lately came, lies about them in their infancy. They see His star in the East continually and so they go to worship Him. But it faded from the Wise Men's eyes, and so it fades from theirs. They grow older, harder, coarser; the knowledge which maturity brings, the earthliness of business cares, the questionings of ripened intellect, drift them down the stream of life away from the brightness which shone upon its source; the light by which they see their course is no longer the sunshine of God's presence, but the light of common day.

So be it, for it is His will—His will that we should walk by faith and not by sight; should pray to One whose face we cannot see; should obey the commands of One whose voice we cannot hear; should work and struggle bravely on, believing in the unseen eye and hand and heart that watches and guides and loves us, remembering that we saw that Presence once with the undimmed clearness of our angel infancy,

sure that we shall see it again when the stroke of death shall rend the veil in twain. For, remember, the Wise Men saw it once again; saw it as their long toilsome journey found its close, pointing to the goal which they had reached. And so it may be that even in this life we shall see it once again; that those of us who live into old age, and fold our hands upon our lap, when our long day's work is done, may catch a returning glimpse, as our outward faculties decay, of the light which burnt for us in childhood. We shall see God in whom we have believed and in the thought of whom our life's work has been done; we shall bear that work before Him as the Wise Men gave their offerings; the gold—of obedience to His royal laws; the frankincense—of devotion to His Godhead; the myrrh—of sorrow and tears and tribulation, which tasted bitter when they came, but which embalmed and purified and preserved our souls for ever.

NEIGHBOURLINESS*

Which now of these three thinkest thou was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves? And he said—He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise.

I SUPPOSE that it occurs to every one who reads the story of the Good Samaritan that it is not a direct answer to the question which called it forth. The Lawyer asked of Christ—"Who is my neighbour?" the Lord's reply was—"Go thou and show mercy to those who need it." For we observe that the story does not make the wounded man the neighbour of the Samaritan, but the Samaritan the neighbour of the wounded man. The question raised a point of social science—the answer registered a Law of Christian Love. If you want to know who your neighbour is, it means, be neighbourly yourself—be actively benevolent before puzzling your mind as to the fit objects of your benevolence; practise religion, and you will not find it difficult to understand. Questions of curiosity, and

* In aid of the Taunton Hospital, 1864.

questions asked in self-defence, always meet the same evasive answer from our Lord—Lord, are there few that be saved ? Strive ye to enter in ! Lord, and what shall this man do ? What is that to thee ? follow thou Me ! Christ was no casuist, His three years of active public work were all too short to balance conflicting principles and adjust the difficulties which beset the laws of action: much too short to satisfy the questionings of men who asked from curiosity and idly. His life was essentially a practical life; to go about *doing* good, to teach lessons of justice, charity, and mercy, and to show how to apply them in daily life—this was His mission upon earth, as shown by all His acts and words. The object which He proposed to Himself in his dealings with mankind was not to school their understandings, but to form their hearts.

Yet questions such as the Lawyer put, when asked in a spirit different from His; a spirit of honesty that is and not of subterfuge, are not necessarily wrong, nay they are inevitable. "Questions of the day" as they are called, involving claims upon our attention, our sympathies, our money, crowd on us from every side: they call us peremptorily to take up action and opinions on one side or another; and

yet they are so hemmed in by opposing principles, so confused by varying circumstances, that it requires not only a loving and conscientious heart but a very clear head and very considerable inquiry to guide us right. If we would not therefore apply the parable unfairly, we must limit it very distinctly. The good Samaritan is held up to us by Christ as a model for our imitation only in cases where distress is evident, and where it is within our power to relieve it.

There could not be much doubt of the distress of this poor man in the parable. Journeying on that desolate road between Jerusalem and Jericho, which, leading over wild rocky country uninhabited and untilled, and often between narrow mountain passes, was then and is in the present day beset with robbers, and most dangerous to travellers, he had been attacked, robbed, and nearly killed, and lay by the roadside helpless. If left there he would surely die; if taken up and tended carefully he might, perhaps, recover. And by chance there came down a certain Priest that way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. The Jewish Priests are painted in the Gospels in particularly odious colours. They were conscious impostors

in the name of religion, hiding self-indulgent lives under a rigid and exacting formalism. This Priest preserved the evil character of his order. When he saw the wounded man, saw, that is, from a distance, some one lying in the road, he passed by on the other side. It would not suit the character of a Priest of God to see a case of sore distress and not relieve it; so he determined *not* to see it; he left the road in which the poor man lay, and struck into another path, and so passed by, without making his well-trained conscience uncomfortable by the sight of a duty which he chose not to discharge. The next man who came that way was not a hypocrite at least. "When he was at the place, he came and looked at him." He saw him cruelly hurt but still alive; he felt that timely help might save him; yet—he too passed on. He pitied the sufferer perhaps, for he seems to have gone out of his way to look at him, felt deeply sorry for him, wished with all his heart that he could help him: but it was getting late; if he lingered night would overtake him, and he would lose his way; the care of the wounded man would be a heavy trouble and expense; and worst of all the robber might come back for further prey, and two lives would be lost

instead of one: and so, with a "poor fellow" and a sigh of hearty pity, I can see him too, uneasy and half-ashamed, yet passing on his way.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." What a picture it is! How the few simple words of beautiful description sink into our hearts! And as we think of it, how the *completeness* of the Samaritan's benevolence comes out: the sick man set upon his own beast, and he toiling on foot beside him; taking him to his own inn; nursing him while there; leaving with the landlord a sum sufficient for two days' keep, and promising that if more were wanted more should be forthcoming—and all this for a man whom he had never seen before, who had no claim on him but that claim of helplessness which his noble heart did not hesitate to recognise, and which has made the name of Good Samaritan a type of simple unpretending Christian charity to all who have ever heard or read his story.

Of course these men, the Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan represent the three ways in

which men may deal with the duty of relieving distress, and in truth with any duty. There are men who habitually shirk the knowledge of what it would be disagreeable to know. According to the standard which they profess, such knowledge would force them either to act in a way which is unpleasant to them, or to admit that their practice falls below their convictions and profession. And so they contrive not to know; with singular adroitness they scent afar off the presence of a duty, and manage to keep out of its way. With natures too exquisitely selfish and with minds too coldly regulated to admit even a transient generous emotion, they hide the bareness of their souls behind a cloak of unctuous religionism. With a pious ejaculation, and the robe of their hypocrisy folded closely round them, they pass by on the other side. The worldly man has human sympathies, the fanatic has kindly instincts; but the Pharisee is rotten at the core; his goodly outside is his all; man finds no fault in him, and God finds no fruit in him. It is not a pleasant character; let us dismiss it.

Go thy way, Jewish Priest—detected hypocrite and coward—fold thy robes around thee as thou passest on the other side, and hug thyself

to think that thou hast turned thy back betimes upon a work of love and charity, irksome to thy cold hard heart. Should robbers fall on thee before thou reachest home, God may teach thee what it is to long for human sympathy and help, that so thou mayest learn to render it thyself another time!

At the Levite, I, for one, will not be the first to cast a stone. Which of us has never allowed sensibility of feeling to pass muster with his conscience in the place of merciful action? The glow which warms our hearts when we are roused by a tale of oppression, or shed a tear over another's woe, is so like the comfort of a self-approving conscience when a duty has been done, that we need reminding roughly how in Heaven's chancery fine feeling counts for nothing; that it is precious only so far as it leads to noble action; that the sensibility which ends where it began makes inaction more inexcusable; that

> Faith's meanest *deed* more favour wears
> Where lives and hearts are weighed
> Than keenest feelings, choicest prayers,
> Which bloom their hour and fade.

Action is the test of feelings. The pity raised in us by the sight of suffering must pass into the prompt energy which relieves it before we

can claim a place in that noble army typified by the Good Samaritan.

What a strongly formed habit of mind must his have been! How deep down in his nature his benevolence must have struck its roots! How entirely as a matter of course must he have learnt to perform his duty the moment it was set before him, in order to have acted as he did, so immediately and so completely. He was travelling no doubt on pressing business; no trifling cause would bring a man with money in his purse, and oil and wine amongst his stores, into that nest of robbers, or tempt a Samaritan into a part of Palestine where his very name was hated and despised. The fears and difficulties which I supposed the Levite to have felt were quite as natural to him; but it seems as if his active loving spirit simply left no room for them to enter. The Levite may have *felt compassion* for the man—the Samaritan *had compassion on him;* with ready skill he dressed his wounds, helped him on to his own mule, and, as we have seen, continued his tender care for him till he should be healed and quite recovered.

I wonder which most of us would imitate in such a case, the Levite or the Samaritan? Ask

any one who has ever collected alms for a society, a charity, a pressing case of suffering. Ask him to describe the uneasy cast of countenance with which his application is received; the voluble arguments adduced to prove that charity begins at home; where something is extorted, the stealthy glance at the Subscription List to see how little can with decency be given; where nothing is to be had, the cordial acknowledgments of the necessity existing for his efforts, the deep regret expressed that this principle and that circumstance prevent the individual from aiding him; ask such a man at the close of his endeavour to sum up his experience in the metaphor of the parable, and he will tell you that he has met with a few Priests, with no end of Levites, and with perhaps not one Samaritan. I believe that he would tell you this; and I believe that his answer would represent the average state of the case amongst mankind. Men are not unfeeling, but neither are they unselfish; the struggle for position or for subsistence, and the habit of restricting our sympathies to our own immediate circle have put out of our sight that great law of Neighbourliness which makes the whole world kin; which affects us not as fathers or as Christians, or as

Englishmen, but as *men*—the duty, most imperative and most Christlike, of succouring at any cost and without delay the suffering, manifest and real, that God allows to cross our path.

I cannot find a passage in the Bible which more distinctly illustrates the claim it is my privilege to make to-day than this famous parable of the good Samaritan. The civilisation which has banished thieves and robbers from our roads is powerless against enemies as terrible. We shall never extirpate disease and accident; they must still haunt our paths: but to search out and to relieve their victims, to lavish the resources of tender hearts and skilful heads upon their cure, to take from human misery the fearful aggravations which ensue, when poverty is wedded to disease—this is within the reach of all of us; not at the cost of personal search, personal contrivance, personal toil, but only at the cost of such munificence as a little thought and self-denial will enable all of us to exercise. Think what is represented by that lofty building from which, as we hurriedly pass by, pale faces look down upon us listlessly. It means that since the year began more than three thousand persons have been healed of maladies more or less

severe : that near nine hundred men and women, sick with dangerous diseases or visited by cruel casualties, against whom in their narrow crowded cottages, with medical aid remote and intermittent, nursing skill unknown, Death would have fought with frightful odds upon his side, have borne more easily their sufferings, and in many instances regained their health, because of the careful nursing, the cleanly surroundings, the appliances of skill and science which that noble institution has placed within their reach. It means that intelligent and able men concentrate their knowledge and experience upon the sick within those walls, *gratuitously* ; so that aid which, in its variety and its completeness, would be wanting to the wealthiest among ourselves, is given free of cost to those whose very helplessness is felt to be their strongest claim for help. What shall be said to those who suffer such a place as this to languish for the want of aid ? who, having brought before their eyes not one poor man but hundreds lying sick by the roadside, pass on indifferent and leave them to their fate ? For our hospital is languishing for want of funds. The relief extended has increased in a greater ratio than the money given, and a debt of £500 presses

on it at the present moment. That is, unless this sum or part of it is in some way found, then either indirectly by the sinking of capital, or directly by the immediate restriction of relief, another year will witness the withdrawal of a portion of that aid which is even now insufficient for the needs of the community which it represents. It rests with us who are present here to avert in some measure this manifold calamity. I wish that any words of mine could so prevail as to raise up from amongst us good Samaritans —could win from many hands and hearts that sacred double gift, which blesseth him that gives and him that takes! We do not need examples in this case to stimulate us to unselfish bounty. If there be a class of men whose lives are sermons on the text I choose to-day it is that class which ministers as the High-priests of Science to bodily suffering and pain. I knew a famous surgeon once—renowned not only for dexterity and skill in his profession, but for the charms of exquisite kindliness and of a widely cultivated mind. His services were so widely sought that his time was literally golden; yet for thirty years of great celebrity, during the two first hours of each day his doors stood open to the poor who chose to come; and the labours of an over busy

day were opened by this course of unrewarded toil amongst sufferers unable to command the care which he so freely gave. I saw him day by day devoting to their cure the same minute and searching skill, the same wonderful memory and rapid judgment, the same urbane and cheery presence, which had made him popular and famous amongst those who were glad to pay him highly for these gifts. And when his great heart ceased to beat, and his busy brain to toil, while a troop of friendly mourners followed his remains along streets darkened by the signs of universal mourning, I saw the crowd of poor, to be counted, men said, by hundreds, who had left their daily work and sacrificed their daily wages to pay their last sad tribute to the great good friend who had dispensed to them health and brightness through so many years. I name him but as one of many, the luxury of whose profession is that Science and Humanity walk hand in hand for them; that the technical interest which attaches to disease awakens personal feeling for the patient; that there is not, nor has ever been, a sick-room in the land which might not chronicle a hundred instances of thoughtful kindness or munificent self-sacrifice on the part of those ever-welcome

visitors: instances rarely blazoned to the world, but which are not forgotten by the grateful sufferer who received them, nor by the approving God who saw them.

It is not much that we are asked to do: we are not asked to penetrate *ourselves* the painful details of a hospital, as many gently-nurtured women have done formerly and now for the love of Christ and of His poor; out of our abundance we may purchase cheap the privilege of helping God—the value of a drawing-room decoration, of a personal adornment, desired not by need but by caprice, would often buy a fellow creature's life, and be laid up for us where moth and rust do not corrupt.

"Go and do thou likewise"—here lies the moral of the whole! School thou and train the sensibility and tenderness of heart which God has given to thee into the practice of active mercy towards those who stand in need of it! Do thou by ready and ungrudging bounty if God has blessed thee with affluence; in any case by active kindness towards the sick and sorrowing and helpless who shall cross thy path, strive in some small measure to pay back to Christ His own unspeakable compassion upon thee! For the one prevision of earth's final judgment

let fall by Him in talk with His disciples measures acceptance or rejection, weal or woe, the right hand or the left, not by Godward consciousness, integrity of conduct, purity of life, but solely by the loving succour extended to the wounded on life's way, to the suffering, the needy, the forlorn, imaged in whom He saw, and commanded them to see, Himself.

DIVES AND LAZARUS

He who loveth God love his brother also.

CHRIST'S messages were personal rather than didactic, narrating oftener than preaching, to describe as well as to exhort. So St. John says: love God, and in order that you may love God love man; Christ does not say love God, does not say love man, but tells the story of one who loved himself alone, and shows us what became of him.

To make His meaning clearer He parables not one man but two; two men as unlike each other, as far removed from one another outwardly as any pair wearing the same human form could be. Some of us may have seen in a criminal Assize Court a judge upon the bench confronting a criminal in the dock; one so wise, so polished and refined, so calm, exalted, dignified; the other so rough, so brutal, so degraded, low, repulsive: and we may have asked ourselves, "Can these both be men? can this incarnation of supreme intelligence and that poor

dull or crouching or defiant savage be scions of the same stock and children of the same common Father?" And yet the thought may have crept into our minds, that could we look on both with the larger other eyes of God, we might sometimes see that the criminal was not only akin to the judge in race and kind, but above him in potential worth; that the prison garb might conceal good impulses and undeveloped virtues which in the hard soil of his miserable environage had had no chance to grow; while the ermine and scarlet might enwrap a nature cold-hearted, impure, selfish, in despite of all the helps his happier life had ministered. And do we not see that this sort of latent paradox must have occurred more than once to Christ, denouncing as He does with strong disfavour and repugnance the decorous respectable church-going magnate; opening His arms to the poor outcast and acknowledged sinner, some publican or harlot, some Zaccheus or some Magdalen; His thought finding full expression in a strongly outlined parable, which imagines the compensations of another world, depicts the highbred gentleman in torment, the wretched beggar in Abraham's bosom.

There was a certain rich man; his name we are

not told, as though the name of a mere rich man were not inscribed in heaven's chancery; we know him only as "the rich man"—Dives in our Latin Bibles. Mightily rich and dainty and magnificent he must have been. On the Levantine shallow seashore floats or crawls a little purple snail, from whose crushed body is expressed a lovely dye. The creature is so small that a hundred are required to tincture a single piece of silk, and a dress so coloured is of enormous cost. In far-off Egyptian towns men wore a delicate linen fabric, fine as gossamer and of snowy whiteness; that too was of rarest manufacture and highest price, beyond the reach of all except the very wealthiest. The rich man clad his body every day in both these precious webs: his undergarment of the snow-white byssus, his silken robe of Tyrian purple; and, thus magnificent in dress, he fared sumptuously. Not gluttonously or drunkenly, mind; with no coarse orgies or riotous debauchery; that would have marred the intention of the parable; his manners probably as refined as his costume was regal; his palace adorned with all that Art could yield; stored with paintings, sculpture, books, his friends eminent and learned, exchanging scholarly talk, cheered by sweetest

music. Chief Pharisees would be there, and Priests of highest rank, proud to bless the board of a profuse subscriber to their Temple splendours and their proselytising missionary schemes; he superior to all in dignity of state and amplitude of knowledge; his hall a home of beautiful hospitality, a preserve of civilisation and of culture. Those who have read later of rich men's banquets in that luxurious yet intellectual Augustan age will not think that I have built too much upon the phrase "fared sumptuously!"

Here is one actor in the story. Pass through his lofty cedar doors into the porch, or covered court, which led to the public street, and there we see the other. Beside the outer gate, creeping thither of his own decrepit effort, or flung down carelessly by the last compassionate neighbour who took any heed to him in his extremity, lay the poor man, Lazarus, loathsome in filth and rags and sores. Lazarus! to the beggar a name is given, a name of two-fold import. It looks back and it looks on: back, for it is the Old Testament Eleazar, that is *God my help*; God, since none among men will help;—forward, to another Lazarus, who was to rise ere long from the dead, with an unheeded message of repent-

ance. There the poor wretch lay ; so near that lavishment of profusion, wealth, and waste, he hoped some crumb might fall his way. The rich man might observe or hear of him ; some tender hearted servant might bring him but a fragment of the victuals thrown away. He hoped in vain. The sounds of revelry and music reached his ears ; the processions of festive guests fell upon his dim half-dying eyes. Within, the stream of daily opulence flowed on ; without, as if in satire of the human hearts and consciences that saw a brother perishing and passed by, the street dogs crowded round the sufferer, and with the instinct of their kind licked the sores which there was no good Samaritan to bind up and heal with oil and wine.

Such a life could not last long. Unnoticed and unrelieved, the beggar died. And what a change the word brings over him ! Tended yesterday by dogs, he is borne in the arms of angels. But now an outcast from the feasts of men, he sits a favoured guest at celestial tables, in the place of highest estimate. His worn unhonoured frame was tossed upon a dunghill or flung into a pauper's grave, but *he* was in Abraham's bosom.

To the rich man too as time went on the same

fateful summons came. He died, and was buried, says the parable; the purple and fine linen which had decked him living would not be wanting to his funeral. The forsaken tenement, whence Life and Thought had fled, was carried with pompous obsequies to a costly sepulchre; his friends proclaimed his virtues, graved them upon storied urn and animated bust; but *he* was in torment.

What brought him to that penal place? His crime was merely this—a beggar lying at his door, and lying unrelieved! Although he knew not Lazarus was there, *because* he knew not Lazarus was there he found himself on the further side of the great dividing gulf. Because he willed to seclude his life in luxury and comfort, did not choose to know the painful sufferings of other men, the change which brought felicity to Lazarus brought misery to him. Here lies the lesson of the parable for us—self-satisfied and comfortable, and easy going and seeming innocent as are many of our lives to-day, there are those outside our doors who might perchance give pause to us did we look beyond the barriers of reasonableness and decency and convention which we build about our ways. "Instead of seeking them out," says Ruskin, "we

turn away from them; shut ourselves within our park walls and garden gates, and are content to know that there is beyond them a whole world in wilderness; a world of secrets which we dare not penetrate, and of sufferings which we dare not conceive."

To the ignorance which Ruskin stigmatised we can lay no claim to-day. Before our eyes and ears, in convincing object lesson and in passionate appeal, have been presented in quite recent years the wrongs of brethren in our midst and our own responsibilty for their redress. Eloquent tongues have sounded trumpet-calls, with no hysterical exaggeration, but with the impact of proven facts and personally acquired knowledge, revealing Lazarus as he is to-day, sweated in the home, poisoned in the factory, stunted in infancy, crippled in maturity, crushed and mutilated victim of weary overwork and starvational underpay; driving home the moral that we, the well-to-do, are involuntary agents of the wrong; that He who spoke the parable is pleading with us in resistless tones to place redemption of these horrors, festering at the rich man's gate to-day, in the forefront of our missionary zeal. How much owest thou unto thy Lord? is the key-

note of another Gospel utterance; in proportion to every one's abundance, influence, power, knowledge, station, and professed Christian standard, is he liable to pay the debt.

In the menacing apologue one point remains, to omit which is to lose its softer and more lenient side. Christ does not here predicate, nay He contradicts, any doctrine of so called eternal punishment. The rich man, He tells us, was "*in torment*": yes; but the word so rendered in our Bibles means, not pain alone, but rather penal *trial* (*βάσανος*), purging *experiment* or *proof*, applied to test the sufferer's nature, to bring out and exhibit such surviving goodness in him as had been suppressed and stifled by prosperity. And the test brought out good in Dives, woke in him an unselfish kindly thought for others, not always easy of conception, much less of expression, when in agony oneself. "I have five brethren, rich and luxurious as I have been: let Lazarus warn them." It might not be; but the purifying process had begun; a ray of light streams on the rich man's torment; we part from him in hope. And so sprang up, not in earliest but in early days, the pious fancy of a region in the unseen world where spirits in prison dree

their doom of wrestling with the lower nature, which outlived the grave, until its last stains should be purged away. Crudely, nay repulsively shaped in sacred Art and Imagery, its tenderer side has been fashioned in the Gerontius Vision of a great modern prophet, while Dante's immortal poem, alive yet more perfectly to the undertone of mercy softening this parable, paints expectant souls as petitioning the throne, like Dives, for those they leave behind:

> "Not for ourselves, since that were useless now,
> But for their sakes who after us remain."

The terror of the tale, I say, is mitigated; its warning remains unimpaired. If its forecast of futurity be no revelation, as from Sinai, but an adoption only of the Rabbinical Jewish Hades, with its vast immeasurable hall, divided by the gulf impassable across which the lost and saved can see and speak, on the one side souls in torment, on the other side souls in bliss, there remains a later Oracle, professing, as this does not, to lift the veil of the Unseen, and show souls gathering for judgment on the right and left of Christ. On the right—because in comforting forlorn and anguished fellow men they had visited and succoured Christ: on the

left—because, appropriating life in fancied blamelessness, yet observant only of themselves, they had seen, not Lazarus, but Christ, a beggar at their door, and had refused to take *Him* in.

WHAT SHE COULD*

She hath done what she could.

Six days before His crucifixion, on the Saturday night as we count days, Christ sate a guest at supper in the house of one who had been and was still called a leper, but whom He probably had healed. His disciples were around Him; amongst the guests was Lazarus, who two months before had risen at our Lord's bidding from his four days' grave. Lazarus' sister Martha waited at the table, eager to attend on Him who, severed from His own domestic ties, yet loved to visit the humble, happy home where the brother and the two sisters dwelt. It was her way of showing her love. Once before, we remember, when He had come to see them, she hastened eagerly to prepare for Him food and drink the best she could, vexed that her sister should not help her;—hospitable, homely soul, with little glimpse into the greatness and the character of Him she loved, yet pouring forth her love

* Preached on Palm Sunday.

and gratitude as she best knew how. Her sister's was a deeper, richer nature. Their friend, she felt, was not an ordinary guest, to be entertained and welcomed and petted like a common visitor. She had placed Him on too high a pedestal to think about His bodily wants, to play the pressing hostess or the attentive waitress on His needs. While on that former day Martha had been cumbered about serving, Mary had sate at Jesus' feet, opening the anxieties and the aspirations of her heart, storing therein eagerly each word that fell from Him, owning Him to possess and striving to extract from Him the secret of the one thing needful. For there is a sympathy between high natures. A pure and noble self sees its own image very soon; beneath all accidents and diversities of knowledge or of station or of age soul speaks at once to soul. It seems as if a great and lofty character comes into the world, like Christ Himself, "for judgment"; for discerning, that is, and separating and attracting by the mere force of contact the nobleness which lies around; unrecognised by the selfish and the petty and the sensual; detected and admired and worshipped by the force of spiritual kinship. So while Martha waited at the table, what was Mary

doing? His familiar talk of late, obscured to most of those who heard it, to her quick perception carried a fatal meaning. She saw His belief to be that His death was drawing near, that this Passover visit would see Him borne down and slain. He may for aught we know, and His words often seem to confirm the thought, have told her privately His conviction that it would be so; and looking back with that strange power which deep affection owns of realising painful details in the future, she had prepared against His death and burial a flask of costly ointment, that, when the soul she loved could speak to her no more, its deserted tabernacle might not lack the highest expression of useless yet soothing tenderness; she had spent her little hoard upon a pound of precious spikenard, intending to anoint with it the sunken head from which Life and Thought should have flown. But to-night, ere that sad time came, she felt she could not wait for it. As she watched Him sitting there amidst the guests, heard the words of wisdom and beauty that He spoke, remembered all those words had been to her, and all her helplessness to show the love and gratitude she felt, she bethought her of the costly gift laid up at home, felt how she could

relieve her overcharged heart by offering it at once ; fetched it from her house close by, crushed the alabaster flask, and poured the fragrant ointment on His head and feet. The act worked as a touchstone on the hearts of those around. Some no doubt whose devotion burnt as high as hers could sympathise and understand. The beloved Apostle who sat next Him, the risen Lazarus who was not far off, they would feel how natural her outbreak was : but to some, to one especially, it seemed a waste. Unreasoning devotion was beyond their ken. Their cool regard had time to calculate ; their love was economical. Christ understood the whole ; its personal expressiveness, its original motive, its hasty change ; —" she hath wrought a good work on *Me* ; she did it for My burial : she hath done what she could. Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

For a memorial of her ; for an encouragement and help to us. She hath done—what she could ! Not the greatness of the deed, but the ability, the devotion, the intention of the giver measures its acceptance with God ; according to that which a man hath, not according to that which

he hath not. Is any of you without the strong love for God which Bible Saints express? do you feel sadly that the passionate sayings of the Psalms and of St. Paul, their thirst for God, their joy in His presence, their place in His pardoning regard, find no echo in your hearts when you hear them? that your religious life is cold, a life of duty and obedience, not of love? Yet Martha was the type of such; her mind, like yours, was practical and homely, not deep and spiritual. But she too did what she could and was accepted. "The Lord loved Mary and her sister Martha." Or do the scars of old sins rankle and fester in your breasts, their ugly memories rising between you and God when you would draw near to Him? Yet Zaccheus, at whose house our Lord had tarried the day before, had been a wrongdoer to many men; yet Mary herself, if she was, as most men think she was, the unnamed woman of St. John's eighth chapter had been a polluted and abandoned outcast. All these did what they could and found salvation; and their story is told to you as a message of encouragement and peace. To all who, overpressed by frequent failure, harassed by conflicting duties, saddened by religious doubts, dejected by feeble health, yet bravely try to do

their best under distracting and disabling trial, come these golden words of divine mercy and of human wisdom from the lips of Him who knew our hearts by the sorrows and the struggles of His own, to tell us that God makes allowance such as man cannot make, that into His verdict on our deeds and lives enter considerations which we should not know how to urge, that He fixes our probation not only by the places we gain and the victories we achieve and by the deeds we do, but by the relation which our success has borne to our opportunities, our temptations, our abilities, by our doing what we can.

We stand now, as Mary stood, six days before the Passover, gazing, as she gazed, on the Christ about to die. The week in our Christian year has come round once more whose services have from earliest times of Christianity acted, as on a stage, the Passion and the Death of Christ. Day after day our Prayer-books rehearse the recital of His sufferings: one Evangelist after another walks past us in his turn, telling of the Supper, the Agony, the Trial, the Crucifixion; pointing to that pale dying figure whose life is the burden and whose death the close of all the Gospel story; calling on us in Jeremiah's

words to behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto His sorrow.

Read for yourselves the thrilling tale. If your hearts are touched and your consciences are kindled, if, as you read, the sacred enthusiasm of pity and of tenderness strikes your souls, guard it after the strain has ceased! guard it into the tumult of daily work and anxious care and family life; keep it within you like a quiet understrain of music to hallow all the chords of life; that so the week, when it has passed, may have shed consciously upon your spiritual life a strength, a steadfastness, a principle, which was not there before.

After death the resurrection. After the sadness and the sympathy of the Passion week the triumph hymn and the Sacramental Supper of Easter. Then if you have earned the right to sing the risen Christ by mourning with Him in his Agony and Passion: then, if you kneel to share the feast which tells of that Atoning Sacrifice on the day in all the year which calls us most earnestly to obey His dying request, that we would eat and drink of it in memory of Him, behind the Ministering Priest will stand the Christ who turned the water into wine at Cana, the Christ who broke the bread upon the Galilean

shore, the Christ who accepted Mary's offering six days before the Passover; and you will go back to your homes with the Peace of God upon your faces and in your heart of hearts; for you will have done—what you could!

THE MOTIVE OF CHRIST'S DEATH*

My kingdom is not of this world.

WHY did the Jewish rulers slay the Christ? St. John tells us, in his eleventh chapter, that they deemed it a political necessity. "If we let this Man alone," they said, "and the populace make Him their King, the Romans will take away our place and nation." "Better," added the High-priest Caiaphas—an inspired utterance, thinks St. John—"better one man perish than the whole nation." But why did Christ give Himself to, nay court, His death? His aims half consolidated, His life half lived, His work half done, His full tide of popularity ready to continue and extend His usefulness, without Him Israel scattered shepherdless—why did He fling away His life? He might have lived if He had pleased; need not have gone up to Jerusalem; need not have challenged the Palm Sunday triumph; might have withdrawn when, on the Tuesday, He saw the temper of the people;

* Preached on Good Friday.

might have met the charge of calling Himself King by an answer which Pilate, which any educated Roman, would have understood : none of these He did. He sought and made inevitable His death ; attacked the princes of the country in Jerusalem, the centre of their power ; affronted the priests in the temple, the stronghold of their religion ; challenged arrest by His Messiah claim ; ensured conviction by His answer to the High-priest ; by His refusal to plead defeated Herod's friendliness and Pilate's strong wish to acquit and to release Him. He gave His enemies a double chance :—commanded tribute to Cæsar, yet called Himself the King ; became, thus, to the mob no King, to Pilate Cæsar's enemy and rebellious rival. That was why Pilate sentenced Him—because He claimed to be a King. "Art Thou a King ?" "Thou sayest that I am a King." Not as men use the word ; from Saul onward in the Scripture page the name of King is fouled with violence, oppression, blood, war, slavery : "I *am* a King," He says, "I *have* a kingdom in a fashion far unlike the phrase of Jew or Roman." "A King ?" "Yes ; but of a world altered, revolutionised, upset, in which riches shall be a peril and a snare, a weakness not a strength ; from which masters shall dis-

appear, and servants take their place; the self-asserting fall, the unresisting rise; King of a newly constructed and newly ordered earth; lowest and servant of all, and therefore Lord of all; My court of publicans and sinners; the cross My sceptre; My motto the service which alone is perfect freedom, the submission which alone is perfect mastery." Of course, to Pilate's ear, such words were senseless, idle as Christ's later appeal to truth. But Christ's countrymen, the Jewish people with Isaiah's prophecies in their hearts and hands, might not they, He thought, understand it? On the Sunday night it seemed as if they would, but Tuesday turned the scale. He saw that it was so; wept on the evening of that day, for it brought to Himself death, to Jerusalem ruin and destruction.

Once more then, even so late as this, seeing the issue clear, why did He not withdraw and wait? There is but one human answer, I suppose—because He knew that where life fails death succeeds. Death courageously encountered ever ennobles them who face it. Weak and bad men have half redeemed their fame by placid courage at the last; how much more does it hallow men preeminently and convincingly good, men not worn out and old, strength past,

fire extinct, mind dull, but young and beloved and brave, in the full blaze of their career! death deifies their life into sacred fable; sanctifies their utterances as messages from on high; they rise from death to live in men's hearts as heroes, heroes as they were not when on earth; their acts examples, their words oracles, themselves "every inch a king."

Thus Christ died, but His royalty survived, the only royalty that lasts; the royalty of a great idea; idea in germ; not then, not now, complete. Worldliness sensualised it, philosophy mystified it, Pharisaic Churches preached ritual, magic, creed, anything but love, fanatical Churches supplanted the human lesson of His life and death by a fantasy of apprehended merits. To us, celebrating His death to-day, let Himself, His ideal self, be made a lesson and a law. *His words a law:* so marked, digested, known, that parables, precepts, sayings, may come to us as light in doubt, as talismans in danger. *His life a law:* with its aim of service and self-sacrifice, its scorn of splendour, riches, ostentation, selfishness, its love of simplicity, meekness, self-forgetfulness, its sympathy with poverty and suffering, its labour to make all tears and sorrow end and vanish from the world. *His death a law:* in fearless up-

holding of the right, facing of the worst, proclaiming of the truth, discrediting of the false. When the world shall have learned the lesson of Christ's life, His death may be forgotten; till then, the uplifted crucifix; till then, the yearly funeral song; till then, the oft-repeated prayer—"By Thy cross and passion, by Thy precious death and burial, good Lord deliver us."

THE BREAKER*

The Breaker is come up.

WHAT have these curious words to do with Easter? Let us see. It is a bit of pastoral imagery, from the lips of the herdsman-prophet Micah. Feeding his flock in the rich Edom meadows, he was wont to fold them till the herbage enclosed was eaten, then to break up the fold, and move on the flock into a fresh pasture. Israel, he says, is a folded flock. But its shepherd had forgotten it, there was none to shift the hurdles; the grass was eaten, the ground trodden and foul, the sheep in their hunger and discomfort cried with a great noise. Suddenly the Prophet sees the Breaker coming: to open the gate, to move the hurdles, to break up the fold; He will pass on before the sheep, they will joyously follow their Shepherd, Leader, King. "The Breaker is come up before them; they have broken up, and passed through the gate and gone out by it; and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord at the

* Preached on Easter Day.

head of them." To Micah came no fulfilment of his prediction, to Israel no Breaker. In her decaying monarchy each succeeding shepherd was more negligent and criminal than the last; the grim wolf, with privy paw, daily devoured apace, and nothing said;—but yet the prophecy was not lost. As in the old Greek fable the fountain Arethusa sunk into the ground on the Dorian mountain side, to pass under the sea, and rise again in the far-off fair Sicilian land, so types and prophecies sink out of sight in the Old Testament page to emerge long after in the New; so this pastoral image fails in Micah, to be fulfilled in Christ, in the Good Shepherd, giving His life for the sheep, and thereby breaking up their prison. And we, dwelling on the Easter story, the empty sepulchre, the broken stone, the grave expanded to a gate of life, condense our Christian hope and joy into the riddle of the Morasthite shepherd twenty-two centuries ago; the Breaker *is* come up "before them"; they have broken up, and have passed through the gate and are gone out by it; and their King has passed before them, and the Lord at the head of them.

Easter has its parable of hope and joy for all. The child rejoices as he reads. Living

ever in fairyland, he sees no difficulty in the Resurrection tale: to him it is as natural as it is gladdening that the gracious Figure which blessed and welcomed little children should arise victorious over death and passion, brought back triumphant to the brethren whom He taught and healed. The religious and worshipping grown man or woman hails the Easter day. In the beneficent Paschal words, in the Eucharistic act of communion, never so appropriate as then, they see the Breaker opening a gate into spiritual pastures stored with heavenly food. To some of them that gate is a familiar one; those pastures often shared. Perhaps all of them passed through it once, as when after Confirmation thoughtfulness and vows the Breaker for the first time came, to shift them from the fold of thoughtless childhood into the wider ways of Christian adolescence and maturity. Perhaps again that gate, opened once, has been closed awhile by the disuse and oblivion which make all return to abandoned duty hard; yet, even so, ever and anon the Breaker reappears, as on succeeding Easter Days, as on this Easter Day perhaps, now present and so soon to pass, beckoning them to hearken yet once more, pleading with them for the devo-

tion, the resolve, the faith, which once was theirs, bidding them again as then of old to walk with the Good Shepherd along those deserted paths. And as to child and adult, so to the very old; enfeebled, crippled, outworn, weary of the fold in which their long lives have been spent, cabined, cribbed, confined, Easter brings the meed of hope. Their life was pleasant once, its pastures fresh and plentiful, streams of inborn joyousness and ever changing experience fertilised their ground. Now the food is tasteless, the ground hard trodden; the streams are dry, the green trees disarrayed of leaves; for youth is gone, struggles have wearied, bereavements made desolate and lonely; the silver cord is loosed, life becomes arid, parched, and dull; as in Micah's forgotten sheepfold, there is no gate, no outlet; the beyond all dark, the present all forlorn—

> "When true hearts lie withered and fond ones are flown,
> Oh who would inhabit this bleak world alone!"

To them, too, at last the Breaker comes: to force the gate of Life; to open to fresh woods and pastures new; to glorify the dreaded grave as an entrance to the brighter, stronger life; the life of which the Easter story is the pledge.

And if to the old, so to the bereaved, Easter

brings its joy; the lesson that for their dear ones, as for themselves, the grave is not the goal. When earth to earth falls sombrely on the coffin lid below, the life of him who lies within it is not over, only new begun. To him the fold is broken up; he is shifted to a new pasture ground, to a life of new work, new experiences, new chances, new capacities. Yes—new capacities; for death, like life, is surely an enlargement of our powers. We like to think that when a good man dies his personality expands in goodness, in enlarged facility of well-doing; what the Bible calls eternal life. When a bad man dies—we do not like to think of that; yet would we fain believe, at Eastertide most of all, that there is in God's ultimate scheme of being a recovery even for the bad; a saving so as by fire; a great final Regeneration when the morning stars which hymned Creation may once more sing together that all is very good. Under yonder sod our loved ones lie, but the Easter sun shines through it into the grave below. "God's acre" our kinsmen over sea call the resting-place of the dead; God's allotment ground—there in the quiet churchyard, beneath the shadow of the grey old church, He sows His seed, the bodies of them that sleep;

there harvests His crop, the souls of those who pass through that opened gate.

And if to these, then also to each one of us who live and move the Breaker acts out liberating release. Not only of what we call "Heaven" Easter speaks; not only on the other side of the grave are the promises of God fulfilled. A poor tale if this world were all a failure, human life a crippled makeshift, here, at any rate, the devil stronger than God, no hope except in the beyond. Heaven is what we shall make it, what we have made earth. Christ spoke of a heaven here—thy kingdom come on earth: make first your heaven here, He meant, that you may carry it with you when you die. Another fold than of human life needs gate and breaker, the fold of human sin and weakness. Barriers of circumstance and habit fence and fold us in; we do as others do, as our fathers did, as our former selves have done. There we need the Breaker; there, in the Easter pageant, He stands. If all sin has its root in selfishness, if Christ's death meant victory over self; if not mere death but death *for others* forms the blazon of the Cross, then to each one of us the Breaker comes on Easter Day, to reveal the essential nobleness of Christ's

life and death, to shed upon our lives new light of duty, new command of love for others, new hope for the future of God's world, new glimpse and insight into His nature, wisdom, love.

There is a grave deeper than the churchyard grave, the grave of *spiritual* death: into that, too, pierces the Easter sun. There is a life, other than the life of mortal man, which dates not from the dissolving of the body but from the conversion of the soul. In both the Breaker bears His part: breaks up the prison house of sin, breaks open the gate of revival. He joins us on our earthly journey to Emmaus; as we learn to recognise the presence of that Fellow Traveller, as our eyes open to the sight of Him, our hearts burn within us at His talk, we shall have laid to heart the meaning of His suffering and conquest, of His life and death, shall have truly marked, digested, learned, the lesson of our Easter text.

ASCENT *

His ascent by which he went up into the House of the Lord.

Ascension is the dominant note of to-day's services, and here is a text that bears upon it. A notable ascent it must have been which is described. It was the special feature of Solomon's palace which dazzled the Queen of Sheba's sight and cast down her spirit—" when she had seen the house which Solomon had built, and the meat of his tables, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers and their apparel, and the ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her." So then it may be a fit verse on which to build some Ascension talk. That palace of King Solomon, the Jewish historian tells us, was a wonder of the Eastern world. Its great hall a hundred and fifty feet in length, with cedar pillars carved to imitate branching trees, its lofty porch or tower outside which hung visible afar off a thousand

* Preached on Ascension Sunday.

shields of beaten gold, its ivory throne planted on the back of a golden bull and bordered by six golden lions—" the throne of judgment, the seat of the house of David "—these were only a portion of its splendours as enumerated in the book of Kings. It stood on an artificial height of hewn stones, apart from and below the level of the Temple Mount; over the valley which separated the two was built a bridge or causeway, from which, by a staircase of red sandal wood, the " ascent " here spoken of, the King, preceded by his five hundred guards, their chief bearing on his shoulder the golden " key of the house of David," walked in state up to the House of the Lord, while the priests and Levites hailed his entrance with the joyful burst of the hundred and thirty-sixth Psalm, " Give thanks unto the Lord for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth for ever."

A great modern writer has taught us to find significance and meaning in all details of architecture, to see, like the Duke in Shakespeare, " Sermons in Stones "; and we may be sure that to Solomon, adept in poetry and parable, this staircase spoke sentiment no less than beauty. It was an *ascent*, observe, from the Palace to the Temple, from the house of the

King to the House of the Lord. There stood the Palace, an abode, shrine, symbol of consummate art, wealth, grandeur, kingly state, sceptre sway; but above it stood the Temple, to be reached only by an ascent. It showed the builder's reverence: himself at the summit of earthly power, he yet sees the higher still; it showed his insight: though no house could hold God's spiritual essence, yet the glory of His Temple's pre-eminence should safeguard spiritual worship.

There is a sermon by Newman working out the thought that the Resurrection was led up to and prepared by successive Old Testament events. We may say the same of Ascension. Abraham goes up into the mountain to see "the day of Christ" in the redemption of Isaac from the sacrificial knife. The first crisis, the conversion, of Jacob's spiritual experience shows him in a dream that parable of human life, the ladder leading up from earth to heaven, up from self to God. Moses goes up Sinai to receive the Law, up Pisgah to behold the promised land. The Ark is carried up the Zion hill with songs and dances—"God is gone up," says the Psalmist, "with a merry noise." Elijah goes up to heaven by a whirlwind from the Gilead

hillside. Finally, Christ, whose whole life had been one long rise—through thoughtful childhood, dutiful youth, self-devoting ministry, completes as at this time the one final stage, mounts up to God's right hand, leaving to those on whom His mantle fell a consummation of the lesson taught before, that ascent is the aim and task of created life—ascent of Nature from the atom to the perfect animal, ascent of Man from the savage to the sage, ascent of the soul from wayward impulsive instinct to reasoning self-controlled maturity.

In the south of France stands a high tower, which travellers scale that they may see the view from its summit. It is gained by a spiral staircase of near two hundred steps, but at intervals are resting-places, five in all, with windows fronting them through which an ever-changing and extending prospect may be viewed. I have sometimes likened it in my fancy to the staircase of human life; that too has five stages, between the cradle and the grave, between infancy and old age. The first is the stage of *Innocence*: we are led up that by others' hands, shielded by others' watchfulness, drawn by others' strength; playful and light-hearted in untried purity, unconscious of the

dangers and the evils awaiting us higher up.

The second is the stage of *Principle.* Our guides have gone, their help withdrawn; we realise our own individuality, fight our own fight; rising passions disturb, temptations born of knowledge menace—most perilous of all the stages. But with the dangers of awakened consciousness comes the strength of spiritual adolescence, strength to choose and to refuse, strength to forge habits out of acts, to combat vice and follow duty, to discern and to maintain the perfect law of liberty, uprightness, purity, self-respect—"I write unto you, young men, *because ye are strong.*"

The third is the stage of *Experience.* We have entered middle age, the past has its slips, disappointments, stumblings, but they were wholesome, limiting, strengthening;—its falls, but they have taught us wariness;—its failures, yet they have sharpened and shaped our powers. Henceforth our aims if less enthusiastic will be more feasible, our progress slower yet more sure—"I write unto you, fathers, because you have known!"

The fourth is the stage of *Calm.* The impetuosity of early enterprise is gone, but assuredness

has come instead. The experience of the stage before has brought victory in its train. If falls are still to be encountered, their defeat is seen to be transient, recovery and progress certain. Inured to attack, expert to fight, in quietness and confidence we possess our strength.

And the fifth is the stage of *Retrospect.* Weary is he who has reached it often, but he cares not, for he has surmounted that which wearied him. Hor, Sinai, Meribah, the Red Sea, Egypt are behind him, but the golden hills of Canaan before: one more stage, and the goal is gained, the life's Ascent complete; many and difficult have been the steps, but they have led up to the house of the Lord.

Is that the end? are there no more steps beyond? Romances end with marriage, biographies end with death; yet as the one means, we know, the fresh beginning of a more varied life, so may not the other be the portal to a renewed, diversified, enlarged ascent? We may ask, but there comes no answer. Beyond the mountain top concludes our life-long task. "Why stand ye gazing up?" was the message which on the first Ascension day sent the Apostles back from speculation into action. It

is the Ascension message to us. Measuring each one of us the steps before him, as age or experience or attainment make them more or fewer, ascend we still in heart and mind. Steep as Jacob's ladder is the climb for some, yet up *his* ladder-steps companioning angels walked. Long as Moses' pilgrimage is the way for some, yet in view from Pisgah top the Promised Land stretched out. To the House of God went up the steps of Solomon—to the throne of God went up ascending Christ.

LOVE THE SOLVENT OF SIN

Because she loved much.

"SAVIOUR, blessed Saviour" are the opening words of Thring's well-known hymn. I dare say none of us quite feel them as we sing; we do not mean hymns in singing as the writer meant them in composing; the hymnal mood is rare; it is an inspiration. Yet there are chapters in the New Testament—and this is one—which we can hardly read without throwing into our thoughts of Christ, and into the language which expresses them, real and passionate emotion.

Over an Oxford College four hundred years old is an ancient carving representing souls in torment; an angel hovers above them to deliver one or another as their sins are wiped away by penal sufferings or the prayers of saints. So Christ on earth as a saviour of the lost saw into the depths of self-tormenting hell which men's sins bring upon themselves; rescued them by sympathy and tenderness; bore them up to

recovery and peace. As we think of the woman taken in adultery, of the penitent thief, of this poor woman in the text, we feel that no terms of loving homage can be unreal, hysterical, out of place; and "Saviour, blessed Saviour," becomes a cry of genuine feeling, not a commonplace of conventional hymnody.

A Pharisee had invited Christ to meat. He went wherever He was bidden, flung His net into all waters: the poor He sought in the village streets and lanes; the middle class in the temple courts; the rich must be seen in their own homes, and to their homes, when asked, He went. He went to all in love; all did not so receive Him. The Bethany sisters, Magdalene, Zaccheus, bade Him eager welcome; not so this Pharisee. He showed no love but only curiosity, contemptuous condescending patronage of the much-followed Nazarene; it was not hospitality as to an equal; not charity, as to a poor man; he gathered his rich friends around that they might see something talked about and new, not doubting that they would overpower and humble, with their manners, refinement, learning, the lowly self-taught peasant Preacher. They did not know their man. Christ's nobility was innate, not due to blazoned ancestry or fine

surroundings; it was part of the man; it *was* the man—a talisman which shrivelled the pretence of false professors, dispersed the haze of conventional grandeur. As, once before, a crowd of fashionable guests scrambling for the highest seats had listened to a lecture on good manners from the carpenter's Son, so now He lays bare quietly and dexterously the consequential ill-bred vulgarity of His arrogant host. For, observe, this Pharisee *was* ill-bred. He asked Christ to his house, yet neglected the rites of civility which his own code dictated; offered no water for His feet, no oil for His hair, no kiss of greeting; professing to welcome Him as a guest he proclaimed that he felt Him an inferior. The Pharisee was no gentleman. That word has a two-fold application. It may mean a man of long descent, fine clothes, abundant money, house and servants, carriages, rank, fashion, dignity, consequence; such a one *may* be a gentleman, but beside and in spite of, not because of, all these things. Or it may mean a man kind and humble, respecting others so as not to think them his inferiors, respecting himself so as not to assert superiority: such a one *must* be a gentleman. The first is sham, the second real, gentility; the first is like

veneer on furniture—a thin fair polished coating laid on from without: scratch it by accident, and the coarse reality appears below. The second is the solid wood, whose fine grain shows out from within, not foreign and skin-deep, but native to the entire block. The first is conventional, the second inborn breeding; or as poor penitent Guinevere said of her husband and of one knight besides

> ——"these two
> Were the most nobly-manner'd men of all;
> For manners are not idle, but the fruit
> Of loyal nature, and of noble mind."

I suppose in this true sense no Pharisee could be a gentleman;—the word means "separatist." The Pharisees dwelt apart; they prided themselves on their holiness, looked on the masses round them as ignorant and unregenerate—"this people which knoweth not the Law is cursed." They were porcelain, the rest were common clay. Impossible that such a man as this should understand Christ, impossible that Christ should not see through him.

So the feast sped on, the host silent, reserved, discourteous, the guests disappointed and uneasy, feeling somehow that this was not what they had come to see—puzzled, nay, overawed.

At a great Eastern feast strangers were allowed to gather in the lower end of the hall to watch the great folks at their banquet, and perhaps to be fed with the discarded scraps. There were strangers there that day and amongst them was one woman, "a woman in the city," says St. Luke, "which was a sinner." Cruel allocation of a word so wide in meaning, as if no sin were bad enough to be named beside that one special sin —the sin of the poor degraded outcast who, to earn her bread, sells herself to the riot and the lust of yet more degraded men. Christ knew her not, but she knew Him; had seen Him and heard Him talk; caught perhaps in the crowd His loving piercing eye; His winged words had struck into Her heart, His sympathy and tenderness had swayed, melted, redeemed it, flashed softness into its brutality, hope into its despair, stripping the vile husk from her encrusted soul. Love had sprung up, as she listened, in her own seared heart—love such as she had never known before; her past fell from her while He spoke, the lies, contumely, slavery, fictitious gaiety, the hopeless privation of all good, which stamped her miserable life, were forgotten in that deep fresh-opened well of love, that confidence in accepting pardon with which leapt suddenly to

novel growth the remnant of purity in her lowest self. She had seen Him from the street and followed Him, crept close, bent over His feet, rained tears upon them, wiped them with her long hair, anointed them with the costly perfumed ointment which was amongst the alluring weapons of her trade. Once more the host's false self rang out through his assumed gentility: "This man can be no prophet; He knows not what this woman is, or He would not suffer her touch and kiss." *He* would not, we may be sure; her touch to him would have meant contamination. Yet how can a sinner's touch contaminate the pure? The sun's rays pierce the dung hill, yet are not thereby defiled. To the pure all things are pure. Note the delicacy, not less the fine scorn and irony, in Christ's defence of her—"She has taken your place, played hostess in your house, done what you omitted; the kiss, the laving, the anointing, offered all by her in richer fashion than you could have discharged it. You think her love passionate, intrusive, indecorous, extravagant. So it is—to you; to you not risen from degradation such as hers. You are well placed, amongst the ninety-and-nine just men, you are whole and need no help, and so can feel no love. But she—she down in

the depths—she saved and rescued out of them —she has loved—loved with the passion of a convalescent soul, and in the torrent of her love her sins are washed away."

To us, as we read and ponder, the rebuke to the Pharisee is lost in the Gospel to the sinner. It sounds the lowest depths; no pollution of soul or body could surpass that moral lowering of all that is best in woman, to all that is ugliest and worst; yet thither the eye, compassion, sympathy of Christ plunged down, descended into that hell, arrested, won, drew up that hapless spirit in prison. The look, the personality, are gone for us; they vanished on the tragedy of the Cross, but in the narrative the voice remains. It remains to lift the sinner—in memories of the Magdalene and the adulteress and of this poor much-loving much-pardoned woman of the great city streets and lanes. It remains to warn the Pharisee—that pride howe'er disguised in its own majesty is littleness; that lovelessness is a sin, perhaps the only sin, unforgiven and unforgiveable. It remains to cheer the poor—with thought of Him, the working man, the poor man's son, who chose poor men for His friends, proclaimed poor men blessed, lavished on poor men His best. It remains to remind the rich,

that dangerous and hateful as is the unrighteous mammon, it is alchemised into true riches when spent on others, not on self. So let us end as we began. In the revealed personality of Christ to us, in our loyalty to Christ, lies the secret of pardon, rescue, elevation, resurrection. Our Christianity is real and lively, the Christianity of the justified sinner not of the separatist Pharisee, in proportion as, reading such a tale as this, our hearts go out to Christ in love.

SERVICE

Whosoever will lose his life shall save it.

What do men expect from the pulpit? what do they ask of the preacher when they settle down to hear him? Talk picturesque, scholarly, diversified? Good—such talk makes entrance for the message which lies behind it. Do they ask sentiment, feeling, pathos, which shall create in them emotion? Good again; yet remembering that sentiment is valuable only to the point where it serves as motive, is unhealthy when it becomes mere luxury; the maximum of feeling producing often the minimum of action. Two things they have a right to expect: first, that the speaker shall address them not by rote, conventionally, at second-hand, but out of the depths of his own nature and the fulness of his own life's self-examining. Secondly, that from the vast storehouse at his command, the varied many-shelved library which we call the Bible, he shall extract or shape or interpret or reveal some

thought, some secret, some *talisman*, which shall abide when the service is over, the Sunday past and gone, to enter into their week-day lives and help them in their daily struggles. Expecting this, men do not always get it. And one explanation of the disappointments, one reason why preachers of the Bible—aye and readers of the Bible too—often fail to gather up the goodly pearls which its merchantmen proffer, is because they refuse to question Psalmist, Apostle, Prophet on their human side; distilling from them only counsels of heavenly perfection, too good for human nature's daily food, instead of practical earthly maxims born of personal trial, which gave to themselves, and therefore will give to us, a clue to the labyrinths of life. People recognise this in secular writers; prize the sayings of a Plato or a Bacon long ago, of an Emerson or a Carlyle to-day, not as authoritative dogmatic precepts—*that* usually breeds revolt—but as utterances of earnest highly gifted yet modest souls, appealing to the combatants on life's battlefield from their vantage-ground of superior genius, moral nobleness, garnered and approved experience. They do *not* recognise it in David, in Isaiah, in Paul; refuse to see that they, no less than the monarchs of classical

or modern thought, were *men*; men moved by passions, harassed by temptations, swayed by circumstance, influenced by companions, limited by ignorance, encumbered by difficulties, bowed by failures like our own, and therefore able to interpret them. And so they miss what the Bible has to tell them; they get from Shakespeare or from Wordsworth what they might more convincingly get from Christ, were it not for the narrow habit which looks on Him and His Apostles as transcendental oracles above the range of human trivial probation, moving on a plane outside the social or practical or intellectual problems which are born of our complex daily life.

It would be instructive, and somewhat disconcerting, to make a list of sayings by Christ which through this habit men and women for the most part fail to assimilate; sayings which lie there like keys ready to our use, while we fumble at the locks they were meant to open. But take the passage cited as one of these, and see if it will not unlock a secret we may be glad to penetrate. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; whosoever will lose his life shall save it." Try and see in it no Sinai deliverance, no imperious shibboleth, but the word of a

teacher confiding to his friends a summary of his own belief born of his own observation. Remember first, for that is always essential to communion with a teacher's mind, under what circumstances it was delivered. It was the end of His ministry; He was sitting with His disciples by the springs of Jordan, just before starting on His last fatal journey to Jerusalem; His words show ripe intimacy with a now closing past, and bear the arresting force of a dying utterance, of a last or nearly last bequest. "I have lived My life," they seem to say; "have run the course I schemed, have done the work I contemplated, taught the doctrines I matured; now I will wrap up and embalm for you—for you, my friends, who will live on still when I am gone, without My guidance—the lesson of My work and life, in one portable graphic sentence—'he that loseth his life shall save it.'"

The sentence seems to me to solve not a secret, but the secret, the riddle of existence. How shall Life be made worth living? what is the road to happiness? Men in all ages have applied themselves to the problem; have recoiled from it, or guessed the answer and have guessed it wrong. The wisest of Old Testament writers owned himself impotent before it;

makes doubt peer out even of the sacred books, discloses a canker of despair at the heart of inspiration-claiming philosophy. The most fascinating of Eastern poets probed it; eagerly frequented, as he tells us, the teaching-halls of Saints and Doctors, evermore to come out by the same door where he went in.

> "With them the seed of wisdom did I sow,
> And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
> And this was all the harvest that I reaped—
> I came like water, and like wind I go."

A renowned English moralist, in a romance which repays many a repeated perusal, sends forth a virtuous prince and princess searching after happiness. Their demand is not extravagant; to find one consciously happy human being will suffice them. They search the palaces of the great, the assemblies of the gay, the schools of philosophy, the haunts of commerce, the tents of Arabs, the huts of peasants; small and great, young and old, in country and in town, all think others happy, none claim happiness for themselves; the pair "conclude that nothing is to be concluded," and return disappointed to their Eastern home.

Do you not think that Christ solved it? solved it here, as He solved many another prob-

lem, by a *paradox*? Seek happiness and ye shall not find it, He says; ye fail to find it because ye seek it; it has one implacable foe, and that foe is Self; to seek it for oneself is to lose it; it comes on one condition, that it is not sought. A few days later He taught this by a significant act: He washed His disciples' feet. To wash the feet of guests bidden to a banquet was the function of a meanest slave: Christ took it on Himself. In that symbolic piscina He drowned not only the earth-soil of cleansed feet, but the arrogance of false dignity, religious pride in exclusive sanctity, social pride in gentility and rank, purse-pride in show and splendour, intellectual pride in superior wit and knowledge; all the offscourings of our lower nature. Kneeling, with girded towel and in slavish posture, He taught that highest dignity, superlative nobility, overflowing wealth, abiding happiness is his who sinks below the lowest that he may minister and serve; a candle, set on high yet self-consumed in giving light; salt, yielding whiteness, refinement, savour to season, sweeten, purify all except itself.

He taught it in His parabled speech. Does the shepherd whose one sheep is lost console himself with the sleek ninety-nine? nay, they

are worthless to him for the time. Over precipitous rocks he goes, wading treacherous swamps, forging through cruel thorns, braving dangerous beasts, till at last—joy unfelt before—he finds and brings home the lost. A sorry figure is the rescued lamb: drenched, shivering, bleeding, lame, beside the clean, handsome, unharmed ninety-nine—loved more than, joyed in more than all, *because* rescued; because won with sacrifice; because perfect happiness waited on the faithful herdsman, not through numbering the found, but through recovering the lost. In lowly act and moving parable the secret of the Great Shepherd's happiness stands revealed to us. Sinners of the streets and lanes, outcast birth-tenants of homes from which all godliness and decency were shut out, Magdalens once pure and clean lapsed to lowest depths of shameful desecrated consciousness; just these He came to succour, saw them with large forbearing charity, won and lifted them by the magic of His sympathy and love; and in that help, judgment, leniency, discerned and brought up from its depths the hidden spring of joy; saved His life by losing it.

Follow it out for yourselves. See if the question is not answered, the problem is not solved,

by the great freedom-giving law of Service; by seeking happiness in life for others not for self; in *that*—so His paradox works out—*finding* happiness sufficient and secure. Be sure *He* found it! not otherwise could He have held untarnished, through thwarting of enemies and through treachery of friends, that regal serenity which only centred happiness sustains. He did not, nor must we, ignore the duty of self-development. We see how He must have amassed during the self-tuition of those long secluded years the full knowledge, ready wit, clear insight, unrivalled ethical idealism, which shine even through the imperfect narrative of His rude reporters. But He taught that *self*-development, for the sake of self, which accumulates wisdom, knowledge, culture, which excludes service and love of others, gathers apples of Sodom at the last. "For he that shuts out love, in turn shall be shut out from love, and on her threshold lie, howling in outer darkness."

He did not, nor must we, overlook the after life, but He makes us feel that neither He nor we know wherein it consists, that we may leave it confidently with God, that our "next world" is the world next us, the world of brothers whom we can help, the world of work which we can

do. That was a wise nor less a happy man who transposed St. Chrysostom's petition into "Granting us in this world life everlasting, and in the world to come knowledge of Thy truth."

So I say Christ found the secret. Some day, I suppose, as His teaching leavens, as God's kingdom grows, all will find the secret; all go out to the lost till no lost remain; all bear others' burdens till none have burdens to be borne; the highest and the noblest in regenerated human estimate will be those who best serve the lowest offices, men and women measured not by power, state, rank, finery, money, even wisdom, but by SERVICE; depth of descent to lift up others, forgetfulness and consuming of self in helping others.

"I would give," said a wise philanthropist, thinker, Christian of to-day—"I would give all the creeds and all the churches for belief deep and universal in the Fatherhood of God, in the Brotherhood of Man, in the life and death of the Man Christ Jesus linking both together."

DOUBT, BELIEF, FAITH

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

This saying raises a momentous problem—the rivalry between faith and reason, between belief and doubt, between the temper which accepts submissively a creed or dogma and the temper which inquires sceptically and insists on logical conviction; commemorating, as it does, the incredulity of an Apostle, and the rebuke—if it be a rebuke—administered to him by Christ. Christ, according to the narrative, had shown Himself to all the apostles except Thomas, exhibiting, in proof of His identity, the crucifixion wounds. They tell St. Thomas, who refuses to believe unless he can see and handle for himself. That proof is granted to him; he believes and adores. His belief is accepted, but as scanty, second-rate, inferior; "Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed."

Disbelief is mostly due to intellectual exactingness, to the cast of mind which rejects whatever

is not proved by rigid evidence or argument. That was not the case with Thomas; his incapacity to believe was moral. His nature was too unhopeful and dejected to receive good news. The key to his character is twice given in the Gospels:—"We know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" is the discordant peevish note with which he breaks into a discourse full of promise and enlightenment; "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" is his despondent cry when Christ sets out for His last passover. They show the character; easily despairing and pessimistic, expectant of the worst. It is a familiar type of mind, the melancholy as opposed to the sanguine nature. It is sketched, with masterly force where all possible religious types are drawn, in the pages of "The Pilgrim's Progress." Read over, if you do not remember it, in that wonderful book, the eloquent, pathetic, humorous delineation of Mr. Fearing—you have the character of Thomas. There are men who, as Bunyan wittily puts it, can only play upon the bass; they sound, he says, only the doleful sackbut, whose notes are more doleful than those of other music. No doubt bass is the ground of music; composers build their harmonies upon it, instruments are

tuned from it. God often touches this string of sadness first when He tunes souls for Himself; it is fair that religious profession should begin with heaviness of mind; but Fearing, Thomas, and their kind, play no other music all their lives. So we see in the text: Thomas was, first, morally timorous, playing bass by preference, not hopeful enough to admit good, fighting against conviction; and, secondly, irrational, disbelieving in the face of sufficient evidence and testimony, unable to plead that he was intellectually unconvinced. Hence Christ's rebuke, not strong or stern, by implication only. Observe, too, that he was invited, nevertheless, to touch and handle. It was a coarse irreverent demand, yet Christ recognises the right to it in a case like his. Let no one call it sacrilegious to intrude even rudely into religious mysteries, to proclaim even harshly religious questionings where the nature cannot be satisfied on simpler terms, and where the search after truth is genuine. The disbelief first, the handling afterwards, were weak, not criminal; nay, in this case, justifiable:

> Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
> At last he beat his music out;
> There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.

Only the Teacher reminds us that there is a higher type of soul and belief than this. It is good where that evidence brings conviction, better where the nature anticipates such evidence, finding testimony answering its previous desire to believe, though short of the physical and scientific certainty which may never come.

But Christ's words go a great way beyond the case of Thomas, and expand into a pronouncement upon faith—faith in the supernatural, in what, though strongly attested, lacks direct evidence and contradicts experience. Faith is belief in the unproved, conviction outstripping evidence; reason is belief in the proved, conviction based on evidence. Both are really forms of reasoning; the one is *implicit* reasoning, where the instinct to believe is folded up, implanted in a man's nature; the other is *explicit* reasoning, where the process of judgment is outside and unbiassed by one's own enlightenment or prepossession. A man is accused of crime. A jury, to whom he is unknown, judges him by, and condemns him on, the evidence alone. Your knowledge of him convinces you that he is innocent; you seize on shreds of evidence to which the jury give no weight; you acquit him

in your own mind, and it turns out by-and-by that you were right: implicit was superior to explicit reasoning. A great general in a campaign knows with preternatural sagacity the enemy's purpose and anticipates his movements. He will not state his arguments, for he knows that they can be demolished; but he proves to have been right—right by implicit reasoning. The man who schemed the canal which joins the European to the African sea had all the engineers of the world against him; he could not answer their objections, yet he knew that he was right, and he performed the impossible task. That was a triumph of implicit reasoning. Newton's discovery of the law of gravity was a guess of inspiration; evidence and proof came afterwards. In all these worldly instances, and in many more, implicit evidence, or faith, was better than explicit faith, or reason, because the men who exercised it were not only men of exalted genius but also deeply versed and practical in the business with which they had to do. So in religion, high natures deeply conversant with the Unseen find clues to His purpose in evidence explicitly inadequate—and that is faith. We implicitly accept an Isaiah or a St. Paul on truths of religion; only here, as in

the other case, this faith, or this implicit reasoning, is confined to natures very high, wise, thoughtful; when a vulgar nature tries to conjure with their wand, faith sinks into credulity, religion into superstition; we have the liquefying of a dead saint's blood, or a grimacing image of the Virgin.

Apply this to the story of the resurrection. Admit, if we please, what has been often urged, that the evidence is imperfect as it stands; that those ten instances of Christ's reappearance would not convince a dispassionate jury. But the men who told the tale were not dispassionate; they had known Him, lived with Him, seen His wonders, heard His talk, revered His self-sacrifice; they expected an exceptional death to follow on so exceptional a life; to them the evidence was sufficing had it been less abundant; they believed implicitly; believed by faith. And we, too, come to see that in dealing with a life like Christ's, as with those kindred mysteries of providence, inspiration, prayer, we are in a region so exceptional that we cannot judge of it by rule; that faith lends better eyes than reason. Science makes conquests every day in the region of the impossible; Röntgen rays and wireless telegraphy are as absolutely miraculous as any

New Testament tales. "Why?" may we not ask, "Why accept from men of science a reserve of natural power transcending all experience, and reject a reserve of divine power as revealed to experts in the things of God?"

So, then, setting aside peculiar and unhealthy natures such as Thomas's, we find in religious minds two attitudes towards revelation; reason friendly to the unproved because enlightened by a sacred prepossession; reason impartially rejecting all conviction not based on irresistible explicit evidence. In the first case *Faith begets Belief;* devotion kindles an enthusiasm which is satisfied with slender argument and lightly overleaps opposing doubt. Potent and contagious, it has one great drawback—it is built upon continued enthusiasm, and if that flags, the faith breaks too. In the other case *Belief begets Faith.* The devotional instinct is weaker than the craving for evidence, testimony, intellectual satisfaction. It must see before it believes, believe before it loves. It remains sometimes sadly unconvinced; its prayer "Help thou mine unbelief" late or never answered; its incredulity called infidel by men less rational, less honest, less devout. But if it does merge into belief it brings to God's service a higher,

deeper insight than the other; its reasoning issues in devotion, it argues that it may adore. The two minds meet at last, as John and Peter met, in adoration before that empty tomb; the first outruns the last, yet goes not in; the other follows later, but goes into the sepulchre.

There is room for both in the many mansions of our Father's house; room for the strong intellect which stands aloof from unseen mysteries, confessing its own limitations, yet true to its own self-respect in refusing to profess belief which it has not honestly attained—room for the unreasoning loving worshipper to whom doubt and proof alike are alien, whose soul, exuding homage and enraptured to obey, fosters faith unquestioning and undisturbed in that which suits its deepest needs and enriches its abiding growth. "To every one that hath shall be given": the over-timid and the over-confident, here the Thomas crying for the touch, there the Peter walking on the water may gain, along with those who lie between their two extremes, equality of satisfied reason and supplement of pre-conceiving faith, in presence of Him who is the Way, the Truth, the Life:—the Way—to the blind unreasoning devotee;

the Truth—to the reluctant, unpersuaded sceptic; the Life—at once of practised Intellect and of instinctive Piety, in the end, to both alike.

JEWELS

They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.

THE closing chapters of Malachi (the "Messenger") form a link between Old Testament and New; from them this verse shines out like one of the jewels which it predicts. It seems to challenge investigation; suggests inquiry as to what is meant by jewels; what by the word; what by the thing.

The word Jewel is an altered form of Joyel: an object which gives Joy. Cornelia, the Roman matron, boasts of her two noble boys as Jewels, yielding her more joy than many a gem of purest ray. And the word occurs often in the Bible:—the Egyptians pressed jewels on the departing Israelites; the High-priest's breastplate was set with jewels; Solomon compares a handsome woman who is a fool to a jewel in a swine's snout; St. John in his dream of the future saw God like a jasper or a sard, well known jewels both; enumerates later on the jewels which formed the

foundation stones of the new Jerusalem. Here, lastly, in the end of things, "God makes up His jewels."

What ARE Jewels? They are minerals; but that is not enough. Granite, sandstone, ironstone, limestone, chalk, are minerals, but not jewels. Jewels are minerals which are also brilliant, richly coloured, hard, rare. Now there are in jewels six noticeable points; and it is well to take them in, and see if they do not represent exactly similar points in human character and life.

FIRST, THEY ARE MADE FROM COARSE MATERIAL. Diamonds are of the same substance as coal; Rubies are from the emery with which needles are cleaned, Sapphire from the cheap metal called alumina, Emerald from felspar, Carbuncle from magnesia, Turquoise from phosphorus; Amethyst, Agate, Opal, are only refined kinds of flint; Pearls are a disease in the oyster which secretes them. SECONDLY, THEY ARE DERIVED AND CONSTRUCTED BY WHAT IS CALLED SEGREGATION. At first floating specks of fluid in the mud which formed the bottom of primæval seas, they crept together and joined each other by a natural principle of attraction, formed distinct compact clusters here and there, hardened slowly with the mud which held them; at last, when in

revolving ages it was heaved up into the dry air and became rock, crystallised into JEWELS. THIRDLY, THEY NEED LIGHT TO REVEAL THEM; you cannot see them in the dark. When the famous Koh-i-noor first came to England, and was placed in the Great Exhibition sixty years ago, it was exhibited I remember in a small tent or shed on the floor of the hall with a gaslight burning all day close beside it to show it off. Walk on the roadside path from Grimsby with the sun in front of you, and it is full of small gleaming specks of chalcedony or quartz, which are a kind of jewel; if the sun is not shining, or is at your back, you cannot see them. The light must be reflected from them to you. FOURTHLY, THEY REFRACT OR BEND LIGHT STRONGLY. Light passing even into common glass is bent out of a straight course, as easy experiments may have shown you; passing into jewels it is bent much more; from some jewels, such as diamonds, so bent that it comes out again at a sharp angle with its line of entrance. That is why jewels are so brilliant, so much more brilliant than glass; they do not let the light pass through them, but they imprison, and then send out again in a countless sparkle, all the rays of light which fall upon them. FIFTHLY, THEY ARE

USUALLY ROUGH WHEN FIRST DISCOVERED. Often you would not know an uncut jewel from a sea-shore pebble. They must be ground and polished on a wheel; the rough surface pared or rubbed away, the bright inside disclosed. SIXTHLY, SOMETIMES THEY ARE A DISEASE. A sharp speck of sand or grit finds access into the oyster's shell and vexes it, the soft fretting skin secretes and throws off pearly matter in layers, which surround the troublesome foreign body and harden it into pearl.

Now let us trace analogies from these natural facts in Nature's factory of jewels. FIRST, MADE OF RAW MATERIAL. And is not humanity common clay; with capacities, powers, virtues, small and scattered in the unformed character, brought together, solidified, strengthened, matured, confirmed, as the higher nature shapes and settles? Intellectually—the judge on the bench and the savage criminal in the dock; morally, the martyr at the stake and the persecutor who inflicts his torments; spiritually—a Mrs. Fry in Newgate and the wretched women with whom she reads and prays and talks—are all made from the same material; only in some the high capacities have been suppressed or lost, in some developed and condensed; in

some the clay is clay, in some it has bred jewels. And the growth is just the same. The specks of fine material were invisible at first, so are the noble elements in the individual; bit by bit the fierce self condenses, and the noble character emerges; spirituality, intellect, will, assert themselves; the jewel issues from the clay. SECONDLY, THE PROCESS IS THE SAME. As the forces of nature which we can recognise and trace and imitate worked upon the primal mass, discarded the worthless, brought together the precious, to crystallise with purity, hardness, lustre, so the processes of education and self-discipline, the influence of teachers, books, companions, thoughts, aims, resolves, has suppressed by degrees the bad and welded the good together. THIRDLY, JEWELS SHINE NOT IN THE DARK. Beauty of character is hidden till Gods' light shines upon it; intellectual power may be Satanic, moral rectitude arrogant, spiritual exaltation Pharisaism, until conception of the Highest, love of Him, obedience to Him, and so light from Him, illumines the self-wrought excellence with reflected lustre from on high. FOURTHLY, JEWELS REFRACT, accumulate, give out, the light. This Godlike lustre not only enters in but passes out. "Let your light so shine before

men;" even attained and lustrous nobleness is imperfect unless it gladdens and cheers others by its example. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often to one another;" mutual conference, influence, example, federation, are yet further needed for ascent to and revelation of the perfect character. FIFTHLY, THEY NEED MOSTLY ARTIFICIAL POLISH. The newly-quarried jewel is rough and dull; the lapidary rubs off the crusts which cover it. Just so in a man, the humanising intercourse with his fellows, enforcing modesty and self-adjustment, the discipline of growing self-knowledge and rising aims, the wearing exercise of sorrow and misfortune, the increasing sympathy with other's sufferings, rubs off the hard or self-conscious or contemptuous or engrossing shell that obscured and dimmed and injured the forming crystal; and the diamond shines out before man and God. SIXTHLY, EVEN THE DISEASED PEARL GROWTH HAS ITS ANTITYPE. Jewels may and do form in a sick-bed, or a life of invalid retirement; form in the vacancies of forced withdrawal no less than in the beneficence and stir of active life:

> "thousands at his bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
> They also serve who only stand and wait."

So each of us is an atom in God's laboratory, bears part in the material from which He works. Coarse, rough, incomplete, at the first, we segregate out of our own natures what is best in them, through each succeeding day's good deeds, self-conquests, active work for God and man. We cluster next with other jewels as they form in other lives; not all equal or alike in bulk, water, colour, density, brilliance, but each setting off the other, all ranged round the central jewel Christ; as jewellers will tell you that in a perfect diamond ornament the smaller stones are all so grouped or "facet-ed" as to reflect light on and from the large central stone or "Table." Still as in one of us or another the better part condenses and compacts, it radiates more light on those around; still as we learn to bear each other's burdens, tolerate each other's weaknesses, crush out mere sensitiveness on behalf of self, the brilliancy of the polish lightens; till the Master Craftsman "makes us up"—selects and transfers us, says George Herbert,

> "As bracelets to adorn the wife
> Of the eternal glorious King,"

to beautify that sunless city of the apocalpytic vision where light will flash on all of us from the

Lord God and from the Lamb. We were coal, clay, sand, rock ; we shall have become JEWELS, garnishing the foundations of the wall of the City of the Most High.

ART IN WORSHIP*

All things come of Thee; and of Thine own have we given Thee.

TRAVELLING through the South of England, just when the stranger begins to look observantly for the tall spire of our loveliest cathedral, we pass a wooded park, with a square tower of unwonted form, half seen amongst its trees. It is the tower of a village church, but strangely superior in richness and in splendour even to the most beautiful of English village churches. It was raised by the lord of a great house close by; a man loved and honoured in his day for statesmanship, for domestic virtue, for stainless life, for deep religious nobleness. All that wealth could yield of decoration or of costliness he lavished on its walls; each fresh visit to foreign lands brought home with him some new gem of art to deck it, now a sacred painting,

* Preached at the consecration of a new Organ in a London Church.

now a sculptured bas-relief, now a Flemish triptych, now a marble pavement inlaid with jasper and lapis lazuli and agate, till from threshold to ceiling the whole Church glowed with choicest rarest beauty, and he could pass from his own ancestral palace to the House of God without the sting of contrast and the pang of self-reproach which a mean or even an ordinary Church would have carried to his sensitive religious instinct. Along the northern gallery runs the legend which I have quoted; the most suggestive, the most abiding, of all the sacred jewels there. One by one, as years pass over us, after we have seen the place, its artistic features fade out of our memories; but those words can never fade, for they are the soul and spirit of the whole; they lift ornament into worship, æsthetic craving into religious impulse, the decorating of God's House and the beautifying of His service into a discharge of the gratitude with which His goodness fills us; a consecration of the culture and the taste which He has given to gladden and to elevate our lives—"All things come of Thee and of Thine own have we given Thee." The words were the words of David. Recorded only in the later chronicle, they tell us how, from what seemed his deathbed to all around, he

started suddenly upon his feet, to lay upon his son the charge of completing the Temple he had not been permitted to begin, to enumerate the costly treasures he had stored up for it, to exhort his princes and his people to add their willing offerings, to shed upon the cold magnificence of the coming reign the glowing fire of his own passionate devotion—" Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty ; for all that is in the heaven and the earth is Thine ; both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer after this sort ? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee." It has been the language of religious munificence in all ages ; language worthy to be uttered first of all by him who rose higher than all others in his conception of what man might do for God ; by the founder of the Jewish Psalter, the first creator of religious music. For observe that in the older Israelite ritual music found no place ; wealth of gold and silver, of dyed and embroidered needlework, of costly oils and incense played their parts in the Tabernacle of the Wilderness, of Shiloh, and of Nob ; but the Mosaic idea of worship

reached its highest point in sacrifice; intense feeling could be expressed only by multiplied slaughter.

Not till the time of David did the eloquence of verse and music take the place of bleeding victims. Born a musician and a poet, rarest union of rare birth-gifts, he impressed both upon the religious services of his race. He was born a musician; his harp was in his hand through life. He bore it with him in his shepherd youth, charmed with it the moody despair of Saul, carried it through his flights to Adullam and En-gedi, led with it the triumphant procession of the Ark from Gibeah to Jerusalem, hung it, says the Jewish tradition, above his royal bed, that even in the night time the wind sighing through his palace might stir its ready strings, roused now his feeble hands to sweep it for the last time in the death song of the sweet Psalmist of Israel. That weird Eastern world of music, so strange to our ideas, with neither time nor harmony, but with clang of cymbal and horn and pipe and harp alternately questioning and answering, awakening and soothing, aided with wild song and wilder dance, he, a master of the craft, seized and swept into the sanctuary of God, rendering the

calves of the lips, giving voice to the praises which had hitherto gone up to heaven mutely in smoke of incense or of burning beasts. And he was born a poet. With his whole heart, says the son of Sirach, he sang songs and loved Him that made him. Passionate, impetuous, wayward, a hundred men in one, he sounded out every expression of religious joy and sorrow which can haunt the human heart. "That rapid stroke as of alternate wings," in which the parallel structure of Hebrew verse is cast, through his lips, came to suit the endless play of human feeling, the understanding of every age and nature. His Psalms find a chief place in all liturgies of all times, in the services of every sect and branch of Christendom. They have cheered martyrs in persecution, led patriot soldiers into battle, shaped the last sighs of dying men. "Heroical magnaminity," says the stateliest of our great divines, "exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised songs of that which is to come, all good necessary to be either known, or done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth."—

This, too, he poured forth primarily for the Temple service; tamed the exuberance of Oriental music to suit those heavenly words, intensified and raised the devotion of the words by linking them to the subtle sweetness of the music; emulating, if ever earthly strains could emulate,

> That undisturbed song of pure concent,
> Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
> To Him that sits thereon,
> With saintly shout and solemn jubilee:
> Where the bright Seraphim in burning row
> Their loud uplifted Angel trumpets blow,
> And the Cherubic host in thousand quires
> Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
> With those just Spirits that wave victorious palms,
> Hymns devout and holy Psalms,
> Singing everlastingly.

That public worship without music is to us a thing almost impossible to conceive, that universal Christendom has adopted it as the choicest implement of praise, we owe to the inspired instinct of the first great Psalmist, and it is with this special interpretation that the words of the Wiltshire legend come home to us; to us who, feeling it as its author did, our privilege to worship the Lord in the *beauty* of holiness, gather here this day to dedicate a new and noble instrument of praise, a finer aid to that

perfection of musical offering which we believe to be precious and acceptable to the most High. For in truth of all the accessories which Art can lend to devotion, Music is the most divine, unearthly, spiritual. The painter fixes his idea upon panel, canvas, glass ; the sculptor stiffens it into stone or marble ; the architect exhibits it in soaring lines, in rich material, in symbolic plan. Their thought is given to us once for all in vessels beautiful but earthly. Who shall say how music is expressed ? In notes scored on paper ?—the music is not there ; only the master hand can interpret and evoke its meaning. In a mechanical instrument small or great ? again the music is not there : only skilled fingers can order the blast of wind or control the vibrating strings to awake the soul that slumbers in its shell. It is ever being born anew, ever dying again to leave blank paper and dumb instrument ; hidden deep in the secret chambers of our nature beyond the region of outward expression and of sense ; essentially spiritual and heavenly by virtue of its strange material limitations. And again, of all the Arts music is alone essentially and necessarily *pure*. Literature teems with dangerous seductiveness ; the brush and chisel can

and do create forms and suggestions earthly, sensual, lowering :—music *cannot* defile if she would ; only through words can she seduce ; the pleasures she affords are simply, unchangeably, innocent. And therefore no doubt it is that this idea of musical worship, once given to mankind by the man after God's own heart, never died away. The choir of David, and its two hundred fourscore and eight musicians, with its three great leaders, Asaph, Heman, Jedu-thun, went on for one thousand years, till choir and Temple and city were swept away. But then we hear dimly the low chants echoing in the Christian catacombs, we see the Tones of Ambrose and of Gregory, severe, solemn, expressionless, rise up out of the early centuries ; we learn how the thrilling notes of young singing boys at Rome melted the stern heart of Karl the Great ; we read the rude old rhymes which tell how King Canute checked his boatmen as they rowed him on the fens to hear the " merry " singing of the monks of Ely ; we rejoice at last to trace in earliest Reformation days the foundation of that grand English school of Cathedral Services and Anthems, Chant and Kyrie and Creed and Sanctus, handed on with ever-increasing art and sweet-

ness even to the present day by an unbroken roll of famous honoured names. Great indeed to the skilful scientist is the gulf between the white-robed choir whose rude strains filled the Temple Courts and the masterpieces of Passion music with their technical finish and dramatic force which holds crowds entranced in our cathedrals at the close of Lent; but to the religious ear both sound alike; both express praise, thanksgiving, sacrifice, with laborious striving after perfectness both yield their best of Science and of Art to Him who giveth all. What spell has missionary love to use for melting, softening, winning souls like the sweet magic of sacred music? how the clear minor of Confession, the contrasted harmony of Response, the measured tenderness of Psalms, the pure single voice in Anthem or in Service, rising like a stream of rich distilled perfume into the air, open the gate of Paradise to the unaccustomed hearer, unlock fountains of tenderness from a dry heart, unscale the spiritual eye, call up tears whose passage purifies and cleans the soul! You who minister this healing sacrifice, remember that you wield a weapon from the armoury of God. Beware lest familiarity and routine blind you to the loftiness of the

office you have assumed; wing the shaft you shoot with personal reverence and devotion; let the snow-white surplice which you wear symbolise hearts pure from outside evil, lips clean in daily converse, not hallowed only by Sunday utterance. And we, who come to hear, let us complete the sacrifice by sharing it; supplementing with our hearty partnership in prayer and praise what, if we do not so receive it, will sink into a secular triumph: *I* am their music, says Jeremiah to his fellow exiles; the prophetic contagion must crown the congregational assent. If, heavenly though it be, music needs the hand and brain of man to give it birth and tone, so musical worship, noblest homage to the Almighty, yet needs accordant human hearts for its elevation to God's throne. If those who are habitual worshippers in this your church consecrate their new vehicle of adoration by increased consent of prayer and praise and fixed attention and close consciousness of an unseen Presence; if lastly some unwonted visitors, drawn hither to-day as to a spectacle, are moved by what they see and hear to engage in regular attendance, and to experience from the Sunday privilege enrichment of their weekday lives, then indeed the

dedicating words of the dying monarch will have found their scope; and the boon which has come to you from God will be given back to Him with usury.

INSPIRATION *

The voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host.

Does God converse with men? and, if so, what is His avenue of communication? are questions which in the primitive human mind must have followed closely on man's first conception of the Unseen. Answered with crude anthropomorphic realism in the early pages of the Bible, they are adorned with splendid pageantry by the later Hebrew prophets. Ezekiel, the prophet of the captivity, dreams a dream beside the river Chebar. He sees the Jehovah of his fathers, a blaze of amber-coloured fire, seated on a sapphire throne, encircled by the federal rainbow. The throne rests upon a firmament or platform of "terrible crystal," and from beneath it issue forth into the earth four strange figures, borrowing in his dream their shapes from the colossal sculptures which must have daily met his eye and have been in our own time brought across the world to us,

* Preached on Whit Sunday.

clear and perfect in their imperishable granite as on the day when they left the graving tool. He saw, as we may see, the stately gods of Nineveh and Babylon, with their several heads of lion, eagle, ox, and bearded man, each moving forwards on its beryl wheel set thick with rings: they came forth from before the throne, with the noise of many waters, speeding on the missions set them by their Master; they went every one straight forward; whither the Spirit was to go they went, and they turned not when they went.

Isaiah's vision of the seraphim is not less august, though it lacks the weird local colouring of the Chaldean monuments; and its phantoms are imaged from the golden guardians of the mercy-seat. Lifted high above them sits the Lord upon His throne; His awful voice is heard —"Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" and, the Prophet's lips unsealed by a burning coal from the altar, he answers, "Here am I; Lord, send me."

Yet once again, seven hundred years later on, the two dreams are blended in the Apocalypse of John. *His* four living creatures bear the six wings of Isaiah's seraphim, the four heads and countless eyes of Ezekiel's cherubim;

but all alike are indistinct and terrible; all stand in vision as Mediator between God and man, bearing forth messages from His presence with straight undeviating swiftness, carrying acknowledgment from man in as swiftly vibrating response, or leading the chorus of His praise in words which we have this day echoed.

In all these visions is seen the same idea; the same attempt to solve the problem of intercommunion between God and man: like the seraph flying with the live coal to touch Isaiah's lips, like the cherubs bearing the scroll of lamentation to be eaten by Ezekiel, like the four beasts of the Apocalypse taking up the hymn of praise to the Lord God Almighty in the name of all created things; all strive to clear, by imagery and figure, a mystery which in one shape or other has pressed on all mankind; to show how the Invisible Eternal God can communicate with our finite material natures; pour His influence on us, receive and welcome our gratitude, hear and answer our prayers.

For the same consciousness which assures us of our physical existence points also to a source of change and development in that existence of which our experience interprets nothing

In every department of our natures we are liable to access or loss of strength which operates on us unmistakably, yet comes we know not whence. There are times, we all know well, when *work* seems easy and natural to us, times when it is performed with effort or not at all; there are times when the workman cannot wield his tools, or finds his deft fingers fail him; when the artist's implements do not execute his will; when the memory will not hold the facts presented to it, nor the reason unravel a complex course of thought; there are times on the other hand when the will translates itself at once and readily, when hand and intelligence stimulate each other, when the mind retains, interprets, fashions without a check, when the brain not only obeys but outruns our call upon it, when the whole nature is harmonious and all its faculties lucidly and freshly strung. So with the *moral* life. Sometimes duty, obedience, self-control, are exercised with a glow of pleasure at the facility we feel; again they are hard and trying, with all our efforts they are half accomplished, for we have lost we know not what which smoothed our way and nerved our powers. So in the *religious* life. Now all seems bright and happy; our hearts warm

to think of God's love and of our debt of gratitude; prayer flows spontaneously, bringing peace and comfort; and yet anon all this is changed. God's nearness is eclipsed; prayer is a duty, not a happiness; doubts and difficulties take the place of confidence and repose; the self that loved and aspired yesterday seems to have passed away, and another self holds its place.

All this comes within the daily knowledge of as many of us as think at all; but in the higher regions of intellectual humanity the evidence of an external motive power is still stronger. Read the life of some great writer whom all the world has consented to admire and accept, and trace the history of his famous works, as his own pen records them. See the sudden dawn upon his mind of the little germ of thought from which the whole will spring; see him sit for hours and days in helpless waiting for the inspiration which he cannot command, evoke, control. At last comes the rush of inventiveness and thought. Character and incident and plot frame themselves out of nothing in his mind. Men and women, distinct from any that ever walked the earth, yet as real and natural as any that our eyes can see, are shaped and fashioned by his

brain. His own creation takes possession of him as though it were a part of his life. He weeps over the sorrows he has imagined, is weighed down by calamities, fictitious and unreal, which yet his own pen can dissipate; is elevated and overjoyed by the nobleness and the virtue, disheartened and saddened by the meanness and the vice of the puppets of his own right hand; parts, when his closing page is written, from those companions of his kindled brain with sense of sorrow and bereavement akin to that which settles on us when living friends are reft from us by death.

Ask such a writer whence his thoughts have sprung, how were forged the links which bound them up, to what source he can trace the knowledge and the power with which all men credit him;—he will tell you that he, at least, knows not. They came to him from without, took possession of him with a power not his own, used him as their interpreter, recorder, scribe.

For to such a question there is but one answer. Human knowledge has done much to analyse its process, none to indicate its source. We can trace with probability, we may some day trace with certainty, the changes in the brain which bespeak inventive genius at its highest

work, the reflex action generating energy, the vibration along the nerves which accompanies tenderness and sympathy and goodness: but the motive power which made the brain to change and the nerves to quiver remains inscrutable as ever. The wisest of philosophers and the humblest of implicit believers meet here on common ground; both find the source and cause in the unseen God, whose influence breathes upon the body and gives it life, breathes upon the brain and gives it wisdom, breathes upon the soul and gives it love and faith and dutifulness and strength and peace. The soul, says Emerson, answers never by words, but by the thing itself that is inquired after. Revelation is the disclosure of the soul.

It is this invisible Influence which in its existence and its manifestations forms the theme of Whitsuntide. Straightforward and undiverted it comes to us from behind the veil; it is our only evidence that God exists, for it is part of God Himself. The creative influence which evolved the universe from chaos, the prophetic influence which animated Balaam, Elijah, David, the warlike influence which carried Joshua to victory, the cleansing influence which cast out devils from the Magdalen, the comfort-

ing influence which consoled and strengthened the bereaved apostles, the myth or dreams or allegories of Old and New Testament alike, Moses' burning bush, Jacob's wrestling stranger, child Samuel's calling voice, the Spirit passing before the face of Job, the angels who ministered to the tempted Christ, the pentecostal rushing wind, are all under their varied names of grace, conversion, conscience, inspiration, breath, spirit, ghost, the same with that invisible but ascending agency which forms the link between the unseen God and us, which generates all access to our moral tenderness and mental strength, creates and furthers all the promptings of our nobler nature. As our bodies live and move by virtue of a sustaining principle which lies behind all our understanding of conception, birth, growth, development, so this higher life is born again in us and grows and dominates our being by a no less subtle perfecting, directing force. We are not left to fight our earthly fight alone; at every turn we feel the unseen bias, the Socratic "dæmon"; from the time when the child learns good from evil in obedience to its mother's word, until the veteran looks back upon the moral victories he gained, the moral defeats he suffered, by

hearkening to or deafening his soul against the promptings of that guardian comrade. Still in that further world it will be with us, we believe, with closer knowledge of its source it may be, clearer tokens of its current; but the same Influence of the same God who will rule and lead us there as here. If we welcome, reverence, use it, obey its motions, act upon its impulses, seize its guidance, hold it fast until it bless us, then, as a Pilot through life's sea closer and more manifest than the mystic Impersonation of theology, we believe in God the Holy Ghost.

FRAGMENTS*

Gather up the fragments that remain.

This injunction strikes one as inconsequent—a suddenly frugal maxim following on an act of limitless prodigality. Why should one who has just fed five thousand with a handful be all at once particular in saving fragments? Had the wonder-working power spent itself for a time, the virtue gone out and ceased, the inspiration flagged, as an electrician's jar discharged of its gathered force needs time to recover and refill? I cannot tell; but the words reverberate beyond the story; pass out filled with meaning into the world of humanity, the world of nature, the indistinct unfathomable region which men call the world of Grace.

"Gather up the fragments!" I remember in my childish days our nursery window looked into a crowded street, and with a child's curiosity I used to watch the passers-by. One there was of special interest—an old man in shabby

* Preached on the last Sunday in an old year.

greasy clothes, bearing a sack over his shoulder, in his hand an iron rod. He stopped before each of the rubbish heaps, which in those untidy days were shot into the street at daybreak from the houses, and turned them over with his rod. Old shoes, bones, battered straw hats and bonnets, rusted keys, he swept into his bag; above all he seemed to care for RAGS, which he put into a smaller bag tied round his waist. A poor, coarse, foul life, to live amongst, and thrive upon, the refuse which other men cast out!—but there was written across it a Christ-legend, "Gather up the fragments." These rags on which he set such store, of common or delicate material—it would be curious to trace them to their source. That tattered fabric formed part once of some fine lady's dress; she proudly walked the streets in its rustling newness like the daughters of Zion whom Isaiah paints; but there was a link between her and the poor rag-picker of which she thought not. Her fine dress came to lose its gloss, passed to her maid, to the secondhand clothes merchant, to actors in a low theatre, or to some poor flaunting outcast of the streets; until, torn and frayed and useless, it was swept into the rag bag at last. Then a new life began for it, for

rags are the raw material of paper. The rag-picker sold his collected sackful to the mill; water cleansed its filth, revolving shears mashed it into pulp; spread out and hot-pressed it became paper, and on the paper were formed WORDS—words from pen or printing-press—words of beautiful imagery, of divine hope, of sacred help, of passionate pleadings; frippery and wastefulness arrayed in inspiration, the cast-off needs of the simple, the outworn paradings of the rich, gathered, transformed, beautified, to become a garment not of perishable bodies but of immortal souls.

We may begin to think better of our rag-picker: he is the agent in a great beneficent transformation—more than that—the exemplification of a great law of God—the law which ever forbids waste; gathers up and converts fragments. Nature will have no waste; the leaves which fall dead from autumn trees enrich the soil for next year's growth; the rivers lost in the sea come back in the clouds to soften the earth with rain; the tiny animals sinking dead into the depths of ocean build up future continents; the refuse of stable and of farmyard, unsightly now and reeking pestilential odours, laid on field and garden, and alchemised by

nature's hand, will add sweetness to the rose, fertility to the crops. Fresh clauses annex themselves to Samson's ancient riddle; as out of the eater came forth meat, so our of sordor sweetness, out of foulness richness, out of corruption purity, out of ugliness beauty, out of death life. Nature passes through her realms; sweeps up to-day's waste for new birth to-morrow; has asked of God no new material since the foundation of the world—ever making new things out of old. And does not God, in His own spiritual realm, gather up the fragments? The broken down wastrels of a workhouse or a madhouse, the savages of an East end slum, they are the rubbish heaps of our imperfect civilisation, the refuse which society casts out that its own interiors may be clean. Does not God, do you think, search through them as HE walks the earth? pick out fragmentary lives, deficient brains, compelled rebels against order, virtue, love? refine, reconstruct, recast them in another world, till the waste is fruitful, and the degraded noble, and the wandering found, and God is all in all, the fragments gathered, nothing lost?

We have made something of our rag-picker, we will let him go. It is a homely image, yet so are the images of Christ and the Prophets homely, for

the homely is that which goes home—home perhaps to hearts and fancies which more delicate imagery would not touch, as the block which is split by the crowbar would turn a razor's edge. But why have I chosen for to-day the text which has brought him in? Because it suits the death knell of the parting year, sounding even now in all our ears. We sit like those five thousand on the Galilean hill top; for a year past God has fed us to the full, as Christ fed them, with gifts of knowledge, opportunities, blessings, happiness. Now the year's feast is at an end, gather up the fragments that remain. *Intellectual* fragments perhaps: few days in the year but bring us something valuable in thought or knowledge if we will only seize and lay it up. All fresh facts, all mental gains, are precious; they come in to enrich the talk, to quicken and weight the pen, to illustrate and enforce the argument. "King Alfred," says the old Chronicle, "bare ever a book in his bosom," in which all facts of moment were noted, to be preserved, read over, fixed. Christ's recipe for a good sermon was to bring forth out of one's treasure things old and new. So gather up the fragments of our *broken knowledge*. Fragments of *time* perhaps: the proverb of pence and

pounds might be transferred to minutes and hours. Incredible to many of us, if summed up, would be the wasted minutes of a single day; the intervals are so short that we care not to employ them, but they total up alarmingly. I have seen an interleaved book with valuable annotations, all collected and written by the owner while, during a year of successive mornings, he was kept a short time waiting for the day's work by an unpunctual pupil. "These Austrians," said Napoleon, when one of his lightning manœuvres had crushed them in the battle-field; "these Austrians do not understand the value of minutes." So gather up the fragments of our *broken time.* Fragments of *moral opportunities* perhaps, neglected and let slip;—affection passing into estrangement, unkind words breeding a quarrel between old friends, severance of dearest ties, that "wrath with those we love which works like madness in the brain." Ah! need it last? The past has other memories, of unity not dissidence, love and harmony, mutual reliance, precious confidence; dwell on them, not on the offence; see if tenderness won't come back; gather up the fragments of our *broken life.* Fragments of *spiritual opportunities*, per-

haps :—natures once devout fallen from the old love of God ; life become hard and worldly, coarse and sinful, doubting thoughts and habits severing from the Father. So it was with the prodigal. He returned and was accepted ; so may we bring old things back, leave the pig troughs and the husks, gather up the fragments of our *broken faith*. If in any of these things our hearts condemn us, as they condemn the best of us most distinctly ; if they condemn our broken aims, our unfulfilled resolves, chances in the past unused, let us gather up the fragments. They lie around our path—those incomplete beginnings, those neglected chances not yet lost to us and swept away, ours still if we will recover them.

The New Year is coming to us as a guest ; it is God's latest child ; even He has never seen its face ; we must prepare to welcome it. The careful keeper of a lodging house sees her guests depart to-day, expects others in two days' time. She stirs, moves, shakes her furniture, brushes everywhere and sweeps, clears away the matters that have accumulated in corners out of sight, makes all sweet and clean.

With care and toil like hers let us meet our coming guest ; seek the rubbish and the vileness

hid in dark forgotten chambers of the soul; have out the virtues and the vices; fling away the vices, put the virtues back. Pick up the fragments;—broken resolves and vows, to be used over again with stronger purpose, braver perseverance, firmer nerve; for the New Year will come to us a messenger from God, as Gehazi came from Elisha to the Shunammite, to remind us that God is on the way, that He is in the opening year. Like Christ at Jerusalem He will look round about on all things, to see if the temples of our souls be clean and fair, with the incense of good unselfish deeds ascending up; or uncared for and untrimmed, with vicious habits in the corners and ugly idols on the shelves, a house where cold worldliness and unchristian greed choke the avenues and paralyse the worship, as the stalls of money changers and the clamour of merchandise turned that other Temple from a house of prayer into a den of thieves.

THE FACE OF GOD

Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

THE beginning of holiness is the *fear* of God, its consummation is the *vision* of God. Moses experienced both: hid his face before the burning bush; gazed at God so closely on the mount, long after, that his own face dazzled others and was veiled from them. Herein lie the poles of religious life—fear and love, sin and saintliness, slavery and worship. In the first page of Scripture Adam hides among the trees of the garden; in the last is the clear vision of the throne; the life-history of the human soul, its education in relation to the Unseen, lies between.

Take in the scene and the man. The scene was the Sinai desert, not the horizonless sandy waste of Arabia or of Libya, but a land broken into heights and depths by fierce volcanic upheaval first, then by a million years of hurricane and thunderstorm, red naked mountains scarred and splintered into precipice and pin-

nacle; between them valleys floored with hardened lava or with pebbly rock; springs bursting up here and there, fertilising a few hundred yards around with short sweet grass and stunted aromatic shrubs, broom and tamarisk and box and shittah-tree and caper and acacia. Here now, as then, a few shepherds feed their scanty flocks, passing from one oasis to another as the grass in each is eaten, living on ewe-milk cheese, and on black bread borne in sacks on their shoulders, sheltering at night, as Elijah sheltered in that same desert, beneath some low spreading shrub or some natural cave. And the man was unsuited strangely to these surroundings; no rough Bedouin native, but a highly cultured gentleman; for forty years past courtier, scholar, poet; popular, caressed, admired; learned in all the learning of the wisest nation in the world; yet exchanging now perforce refinement, art, books, temples, royal courts, for menial shepherd-cares and for the mateless comradeship of a half savage Midianite wife. A weak man would have been crushed by such a change; him it braced and raised. Separate from the world and alone with God, he gained, from the awful majesty of the desert, religious instincts which the

temple pomp and ritual of Thebes and Memphis failed to generate; received the impress of God's spirit; measured his own soul's strength; brooded over the patriotic impulses whose indulgence had already driven him from Egypt; saw in the burning bush, although with the terror of a novice, the revealing Deity which was to transform the luxurious favourite of Pharaoh, the homeless wanderer of Midian, into "Moses, the servant of the Lord, whom the Lord knew face to face."

If, then, Moses, veiled fearfully from God, be a type of the natural man, Moses, veiled gloriously from man, a type of the perfected saint, let us see how the one educates into the other. Sometimes the growth is steady, gradual, natural, almost imperceptible, through childhood, youth, and age; no break or rent is seen in peaceful progress; each fresh stage of holiness springs spontaneously, organically, out of the last, "the child is father of the man," a musical under-song of continual goodness floating round the happy life. We saw it in Joseph; we see it in Samuel and in Christ, increasing both in wisdom and in favour. Sometimes it comes by conversion sudden and abrupt, striking, violent, spasmodic, visible;

by some great shock a wild and reckless youth turns to energy, devotion, zeal. Such changes leave their scars ; a suddenly altered man is not like a gradually developed man, moderate, calm, wise, gentle; shows often eager partisanship, superstitious zeal, fanatical and even mischievous intolerance. Such men work God's will ; await, perhaps, beyond the grave the perfectness denied them here, yet never can shake off the evil bias of the wild ungoverned early time. They have dwelt with Lot in the cities of the plain, and even after their ascent to the mountain top, the taint of Sodom clings. And finally it comes through discipline of suffering, working out the mystery of pain. Rebellion first of all—" What have I done that I should be afflicted thus and laid aside ? " then gradual self-knowledge, then penitence, then consciousness of pardon, then longing to see the Pardoner's face, till the sick-bed becomes holy ground, the shoes fall off the feet, repining is changed into reliance, patience has her perfect work.

How are we to know this holiness ? Christ has told us once for all—by its fruits. The leaves of His vine are privileges, the bloom is promise, the fruit is action. Study Christ's character

and His teaching; see how both are above all things practical. Character is the ruling force stamped on a man's life, the faculty or quality, be it will or intelligence, insight or sympathy, enterprise or resolve, which, inborn or through discipline, shows predominant. Christ's character is practical; He ever puts aside speculation, emotion, homage, fancy, in favour of practice. "Who is my neighbour?" asks the sceptical questioner.—"Go and do" Christ answers. "What shall this man do?" asks the officious questioner.—The answer is "Follow thou Me." "Are there few to be saved?" asks the curious questioner.—"Strive thou," He says, "to enter in." "May I first bury my father?" is the filial request.—"Let the dead bury their dead," He answers. "May I say farewell to those at home?" is the prayer of the domestic man, to be warned lest he looks back having once put his hand to the plough. "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee" is the cry of devout ecstasy, to be checked by "Yea rather blessed are they that hear and do."

So, then, the holy life is first of all a life of *duty*, doing that which comes to us as having to be done, swaying the household, ploughing the field, wielding the tool, studying the book,

holding the pen, guiding the business; faithfully, honestly, at our best, remembering the true nobility of all well-wrought work. And, secondly, it is a life of *conflict*. We pray for infants at the font that they may crucify the old man and partake the death of Christ; that means the life-long fight: two natures in our souls, one low, coarse, mean, sensual; one pure, unselfish, lofty. The task of life is to kill the lower, to replace it by the higher in ourselves until the image of the beast is extinct, the image of God supreme. And, thirdly, it is a life of *love* for others. The great Refiner ever sees His own face at last in the soul which He purifies. His life-joy lay in relieving wretchedness, healing sickness, comforting weakness, cheering sorrow; ours must be the same. From Jerusalem to Jericho extends our daily path. Thieves hide in many a cave, victims lie by many a roadside wounded and half dead. Let us live and love in the spirit of that Good Samaritan, that our Judge's final survey may lift us to the right hand of judgment, in that "doing to the least of these we have done thereby to Him."

And so the mist clears off, the face shows out unveiled, the Moriah comes in view. Three stages Scripture notes in saintliness. "Afraid

to look upon God ; " for the fight had not begun, and we shrank from all it might bring. " Thy face, Lord, will I seek ; " for we have cast away our load of sin and taken up the cross instead. " I have seen God face to face ; " for we have wrestled all the night, and through the mists of earth come up the rays which herald and precede the rising sun—the full and perfect vision, which sin postpones, which love assures, which death reveals. " He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And His servants shall serve Him, and His name shall be on their foreheads, *and they shall see His Face.*"

Printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.

DATE DUE

THE KING'S LIBRARY
3000092180

PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY